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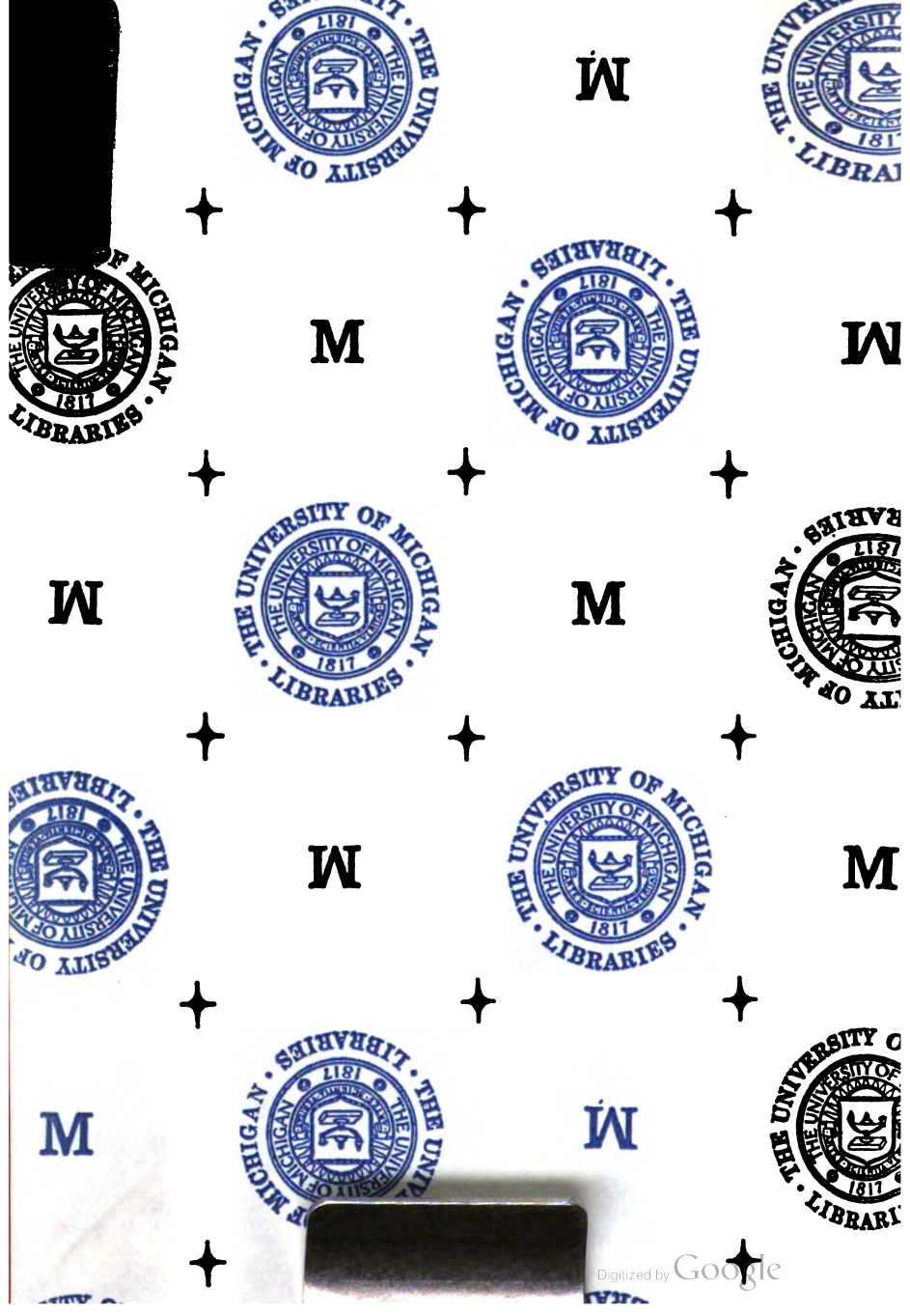
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CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH CLASSICS

**Poems
by
George Crabbe**

In Three Volumes

GEORGE CRABBE

Born, 1754

Died, 1832

GEORGE CRABBE

POEMS

EDITED BY

ADOLPHUS WILLIAM WARD,

Litt.D., Hon. LL.D., F.B.A.

Master of Peterhouse



Volume II

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PREFACE.

THE poems contained in this volume, which comprise the whole of the *Tales* and the first eleven of the *Tales of the Hall*, are without exception printed from the edition of 1823, the last of Crabbe's works published in this country in his lifetime.

The *Variants* in the *Tales* are from the first edition (1812) and from the 'Original MS.' readings given as footnotes in the younger Crabbe's edition of his father's *Life and Poems* (1834). The *Variants* in the *Tales of the Hall* are from the first edition (1819); from the 'Original MS.' readings as above; from the Crabbe MSS. in the possession of the Cambridge University Press (which will be described in the Preface to Vol. III, where a much fuller use will be made of them), and from the MSS. in the valuable collection of Mrs Mackay of Trowbridge, most kindly lent by her for examination and use (to which the same remark applies). In the present volume will also be found certain *Addenda* to the *Variants* in Vol. I, from the 'Original MS.' readings printed by the younger Crabbe.

Among the *Errata* in this volume are included a considerable number of quotations from Shakespeare with wrong indications of acts or scenes, and occasionally even of the plays from which the passages are taken. A large proportion of the quotations are in themselves imperfect, or otherwise incorrect. Perhaps it is stretching

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a point to treat all these defects as oversights ; sometimes Crabbe may have made intentional changes, and more frequently he may have been wilfully careless. No readings which he could have found in any current edition of Shakespeare have been altered.

In the preparation of the present volume, I have again enjoyed the advantage of the friendly aid and cooperation of Mr A. T. BARTHOLOMEW, to whom I am specially indebted for the compilation of the *Variants*. Our joint efforts have been occasionally defeated by the illegibility of passages in the Crabbe MSS. acquired by our University Press. It is hoped that the third and concluding volume of this edition, which will contain a considerable amount of previously unpublished verse, will appear in the course of the summer.

A. W. WARD.

PETERHOUSE LODGE, CAMBRIDGE.
March 19th, 1906.

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TALES.

TO
HER GRACE ISABELLA
DUCHESS DOWAGER OF
RUTLAND.

MADAM,

THE dedication of works of literature to persons of superior worth and eminence appears to have been a measure early adopted, and continued to the present time ; so that, whatever objections have been made to the language of dedicators, such addresses must be considered as perfectly consistent with reason and propriety ; in fact, superior rank and elevated situation in life naturally and justly claim such respect, and it is the prerogative of greatness to give countenance and favour to all who appear to merit and to need them ; it is likewise the prerogative of every kind of superiority and celebrity, of personal merit when peculiar or extraordinary, of dignity, elegance, wealth, and beauty, certainly of superior intellect and intellectual acquirements ; every such kind of eminence has its privilege, and, being itself an object of distinguished approbation, it gains attention for whomsoever its possessor distinguishes and approves.

Yet the causes and motives for an address of this kind rest not entirely with the merit of the patron, the feelings of the author himself having their weight and consideration in the choice he makes : he may have gratitude for benefits received, or pride not illaudable in aspiring to the favour of those whose

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notice confers honour ; or he may entertain a secret but strong desire of seeing a name in the entrance of his work which he is accustomed to utter with peculiar satisfaction, and to hear mentioned with veneration and delight.

Such, madam, are the various kinds of eminence for which an author on these occasions would probably seek, and they meet in your grace ; such too are the feelings by which he would be actuated, and they centre in me : let me therefore entreat your grace to take this book into your favour and protection, and to receive it as an offering of the utmost respect and duty, from,

May it please Your Grace,

Your Grace's

Most obedient, humble,

And devoted servant,

GEORGE CRABBE.

Muston, July 31, 1812.

PREFACE.

THAT the appearance of the present work before the public is occasioned by a favourable reception of the former two, I hesitate not to acknowledge ; because, while the confession may be regarded as some proof of gratitude, or at least of attention from an author to his readers, it ought not to be considered as an indication of vanity. It is unquestionably very pleasant to be assured that our labours are well received ; but, nevertheless, this must not be taken for a just and full criterion of their merit : publications of great intrinsic value have been met with so much coolness, that a writer who succeeds in obtaining some degree of notice should look upon himself rather as one favoured than meritorious, as gaining a prize from Fortune, and not a recompense for desert ; and, on the contrary, as it is well known that books of very inferior kind have been at once pushed into the strong current of popularity, and are there kept buoyant by the force of the stream, the writer who acquires not this adventitious help may be reckoned rather as unfortunate than undeserving ; and from these opposite considerations it follows, that a man may speak of his success without incurring justly the odium of conceit, and may likewise acknowledge a disappointment without an adequate cause for humiliation or self-reproach.

But were it true that something of the complacency of self-approbation would insinuate itself into an author's mind with the idea of success, the sensation would not be that of unalloyed pleasure ; it would perhaps assist him to bear, but it would not enable him to escape, the mortification he must encounter from censures, which, though he may be unwilling to admit, yet he finds himself unable to confute ; as well as from advice, which, at the same time that he cannot but approve, he is compelled to reject.

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Reproof and advice, it is probable, every author will receive, if we except those who merit so much of the former, that the latter is contemptuously denied them ; now of these, reproof, though it may cause more temporary uneasiness, will in many cases create less difficulty, since errors may be corrected when opportunity occurs ; but advice, I repeat, may be of such nature, that it will be painful to reject, and yet impossible to follow it ; and in this predicament I conceive myself to be placed. There has been recommended to me, and from authority which neither inclination nor prudence leads me to resist, in any new work I might undertake, an unity of subject, and that arrangement of my materials which connects the whole and gives additional interest to every part ; in fact, if not an Epic Poem, strictly so denominated, yet such composition as would possess a regular succession of events, and a catastrophe to which every incident should be subservient, and which every character, in a greater or less degree, should conspire to accomplish.

In a Poem of this nature, the principal and inferior characters in some degree resemble a general and his army, where no one pursues his peculiar objects and adventures, [but] pursues them in unison with the movements and grand purposes of the whole body ; where there is a community of interests and a subordination of actors ; and it was upon this view of the subject, and of the necessity for such distribution of persons and events, that I found myself obliged to relinquish an undertaking, for which the characters I could command, and the adventures I could describe, were altogether unfitted.

But if these characters which seemed to be at my disposal were not such as would coalesce into one body, nor were of a nature to be commanded by one mind, so neither on examination did they appear as an unconnected multitude, accidentally collected, to be suddenly dispersed ; but rather beings of whom might be formed groups and smaller societies, the relations of whose adventures and pursuits might bear that kind of similitude to an Heroic Poem, which these minor associations of men (as pilgrims on the way to their saint, or parties in search of amusement, travellers excited by curiosity, or adventurers in pursuit of gain) have in points of connexion and importance with a regular and disciplined army.

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Allowing this comparison, it is manifest that while much is lost for want of unity of subject and grandeur of design, something is gained by greater variety of incident and more minute display of character, by accuracy of description and diversity of scene : in these narratives we pass from gay to grave, from lively to severe, not only without impropriety, but with manifest advantage. In one continued and connected Poem, the reader is, in general, highly gratified or severely disappointed ; by many independent narratives, he has the renovation of hope, although he has been dissatisfied, and a prospect of reiterated pleasure, should he find himself entertained.

I mean not, however, to compare these different modes of writing as if I were balancing their advantages and defects before I could give preference to either ; with me the way I take is not a matter of choice, but of necessity ; I present not my Tales to the reader as if I had chosen the best method of ensuring his approbation, but as using the only means I possessed of engaging his attention.

It may probably be remarked that Tales, however dissimilar, might have been connected by some associating circumstance to which the whole number might bear equal affinity, and that examples of such union are to be found in Chaucer, in Boccace, and other collectors and inventors of Tales, which, considered in themselves, are altogether independent ; and to this idea I gave so much consideration as convinced me that I could not avail myself of the benefit of such artificial mode of affinity. To imitate the English poet, characters must be found adapted to their several relations, and this is a point of great difficulty and hazard ; much allowance seems to be required even for Chaucer himself, since it is difficult to conceive that on any occasion the devout and delicate Prioress, the courtly and valiant Knight, and "the poure good Man the persone of a Towne," would be the voluntary companions of the drunken Miller, the licentious Sompnour, and "the Wanton Wife of Bath," and enter into that colloquial and travelling intimacy which, if a common pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas may be said to excuse, I know nothing beside (and certainly nothing in these times) that would produce such effect. Boccace, it is true, avoids all difficulty of this kind, by not assigning to

the ten relators of his hundred Tales any marked or peculiar characters ; nor, though there are male and female in company, can the sex of the narrator be distinguished in the narration. To have followed the method of Chaucer might have been of use, but could scarcely be adopted, from its difficulty ; and to have taken that of the Italian writer would have been perfectly easy, but could be of no service : the attempt at union therefore has been relinquished, and these relations are submitted to the public, connected by no other circumstance than their being the productions of the same author, and devoted to the same purpose, the entertainment of his readers.

It has been already acknowledged, that these compositions have no pretensions to be estimated with the more lofty and heroic kind of poems, but I feel great reluctance in admitting that they have not a fair and legitimate claim to the poetic character. In vulgar estimation, indeed, all that is not prose passes for poetry ; but I have not ambition of so humble a kind as to be satisfied with a concession which requires nothing in the poet, except his ability for counting syllables ; and I trust something more of the poetic character will be allowed to the succeeding pages than what the heroes of the Dunciad might share with the author ; nor was I aware that by describing, as faithfully as I could, men, manners, and things, I was forfeiting a just title to a name which has been freely granted to many whom to equal, and even to excel, is but very stinted commendation.

In this case it appears that the usual comparison between poetry and painting entirely fails : the artist who takes an accurate likeness of individuals, or a faithful representation of scenery, may not rank so high in the public estimation as one who paints an historical event, or an heroic action ; but he is nevertheless a painter, and his accuracy is so far from diminishing his reputation, that it procures for him in general both fame and emolument ; nor is it perhaps with strict justice determined that the credit and reputation of those verses which strongly and faithfully delineate character and manners, should be lessened in the opinion of the public by the very accuracy which gives value and distinction to the productions of the pencil.

Nevertheless, it must be granted that the pretensions of any

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composition to be regarded as poetry will depend upon that definition of the poetic character which he who undertakes to determine the question has considered as decisive ; and it is confessed also that one of great authority may be adopted, by which the verses now before the reader, and many others which have probably amused and delighted him, must be excluded : a definition like this will be found in the words which the greatest of poets, not divinely inspired, has given to the most noble and valiant Duke of Athens—

“The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
“Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;
“And as Imagination bodies forth
“The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen
“Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
“A local habitation, and a name¹.”

Hence we observe the poet is one who, in the excursions of his fancy between heaven and earth, lights upon a kind of fairy-land, in which he places a creation of his own, where he embodies shapes, and gives action and adventure to his ideal offspring ; taking captive the imagination of his readers, he elevates them above the grossness of actual being, into the soothing and pleasant atmosphere of supra-mundane existence : there he obtains for his visionary inhabitants the interest that engages a reader’s attention without ruffling his feelings, and excites that moderate kind of sympathy which the realities of nature oftentimes fail to produce, either because they are so familiar and insignificant that they excite no determinate emotion, or are so harsh and powerful that the feelings excited are grating and distasteful.

Be it then granted that (as Duke Theseus observes) “such tricks hath strong Imagination,” and that such poets “are of imagination all compact ;” let it be further conceded, that theirs is a higher and more dignified kind of composition, nay, the only kind that has pretensions to inspiration : still, that these poets should so entirely engross the title as to exclude those who address their productions to the plain sense and sober judgment of their readers, rather than to their fancy and imagination, I must repeat that I am unwilling to admit—because I conceive

¹ *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act V. Scene 1.

that, by granting such right of exclusion, a vast deal of what has been hitherto received as genuine poetry would no longer be entitled to that appellation.

All that kind of satire wherein character is skilfully delineated must (this criterion being allowed) no longer be esteemed as genuine poetry; and for the same reason many affecting narratives which are founded on real events, and borrow no aid whatever from the imagination of the writer, must likewise be rejected: a considerable part of the poems, as they have hitherto been denominated, of Chaucer, are of this naked and unveiled character; and there are in his *Tales* many pages of coarse, accurate, and minute, but very striking description. Many small poems in a subsequent age, of most impressive kind, are adapted and addressed to the common sense of the reader, and prevail by the strong language of truth and nature; they amused our ancestors, and they continue to engage our interest, and excite our feelings, by the same powerful appeals to the heart and affections. In times less remote, Dryden has given us much of this poetry, in which the force of expression and accuracy of description have neither needed nor obtained assistance from the fancy of the writer; the characters in his *Absalom* and *Achitophel* are instances of this, and more especially those of *Doeg* and *Og* in the second part: these, with all their grossness, and almost offensive accuracy, are found to possess that strength and spirit which has preserved from utter annihilation the dead bodies of *Tate*, to whom they were inhumanly bound, happily with a fate the reverse of that caused by the cruelty of *Mezentius*; for there the living perished in the putrefaction of the dead, and here the dead are preserved by the vitality of the living. And, to bring forward one other example, it will be found that *Pope* himself has no small portion of this actuality of relation, this nudity of description, and poetry without an atmosphere; the lines beginning, "In the worst inn's worst room," are an example, and many others may be seen in his *Satires*, *Imitations*, and above all in his *Dunciad*: the frequent absence of those "Sports of Fancy," and "Tricks of strong Imagination," have been so much observed, that some have ventured to question whether even this writer were a poet; and though, as *Dr. Johnson* has remarked, it would be difficult to form a definition of one in which *Pope* should not

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be admitted, yet they who doubted his claim, had, it is likely, provided for his exclusion by forming that kind of character for their poet, in which this elegant versifier, for so he must be then named, should not be comprehended.

These things considered, an author will find comfort in his expulsion from the rank and society of poets, by reflecting that men much his superiors were likewise shut out, and more especially when he finds also that men not much his superiors are entitled to admission.

But in whatever degree I may venture to differ from any others in my notions of the qualifications and character of the true poet, I most cordially assent to their opinion who assert that his principal exertions must be made to engage the attention of his readers; and further, I must allow that the effect of poetry should be to lift the mind from the painful realities of actual existence, from its every-day concerns, and its perpetually occurring vexations, and to give it repose by substituting objects in their place which it may contemplate with some degree of interest and satisfaction; but what is there in all this, which may not be effected by a fair representation of existing character? nay, by a faithful delineation of those painful realities, those every-day concerns, and those perpetually-occurring vexations themselves, provided they be not (which is hardly to be supposed) the very concerns and distresses of the reader? for, when it is admitted that they have no particular relation to him, but are the troubles and anxieties of other men, they excite and interest his feelings as the imaginary exploits, adventures, and perils of romance;—they soothe his mind, and keep his curiosity pleasantly awake; they appear to have enough of reality to engage his sympathy, but possess not interest sufficient to create painful sensations. Fiction itself, we know, and every work of fancy, must for a time have the effect of realities; nay, the very enchanters, spirits, and monsters of Ariosto and Spenser must be present in the mind of the reader while he is engaged by their operations, or they would be as the objects and incidents of a nursery tale to a rational understanding, altogether despised and neglected: in truth, I can but consider this pleasant effect upon the mind of a reader as depending neither upon the events related (whether they be actual or imaginary), nor upon the characters introduced (whether taken from life or fancy), but

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upon the manner in which the poem itself is conducted ; let that be judiciously managed, and the occurrences actually copied from life will have the same happy effect as the inventions of a creative fancy ;—while, on the other hand, the imaginary persons and incidents to which the poet has given “a local habitation, and a name,” will make upon the concurring feelings of the reader the same impressions with those taken from truth and nature, because they will appear to be derived from that source, and therefore of necessity will have a similar effect.

Having thus far presumed to claim for the ensuing pages the rank and title of poetry, I attempt no more, nor venture to class or compare them with any other kinds of poetical composition ; their place will doubtless be found for them.

A principal view and wish of the poet must be to engage the mind of his readers, as, failing in that point, he will scarcely succeed in any other : I therefore willingly confess that much of my time and assiduity has been devoted to this purpose ; but, to the ambition of pleasing, no other sacrifices have, I trust, been made, than of my own labour and care. Nothing will be found that militates against the rules of propriety and good manners, nothing that offends against the more important precepts of morality and religion ; and with this negative kind of merit, I commit my book to the judgment and taste of the reader—not being willing to provoke his vigilance by professions of accuracy, nor to solicit his indulgence by apologies for mistakes.

TALE I.

THE DUMB ORATORS;

OR,

THE BENEFIT OF SOCIETY.

[In] fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe.....
Full of wise saws and modern instances.

As you Like it, A& II. Scene 7.

Deep shame hath struck me dumb.

King John, A& IV. Scene 2.

He gives the bastinado with his tongue,
Our ears are cudgell'd.

King John, A& II. Scene [1].

Let's kill all the lawyers;
Now show yourselves men: 'tis for liberty:
We will not leave one lord or gentleman.

2 Henry VI. [A& IV. Scene 2].

And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.
Twelfth Night, A& V. Scene last.

TALE I.

THE DUMB ORATORS.

THAT all men would be cowards if they dare,
Some men we know have courage to declare ;
And this the life of many an hero shows,
That like the tide, man's courage ebbs and flows :
With friends and gay companions round them, then
Men boldly speak and have the hearts of men ;
Who, with opponents seated, miss the aid
Of kind applauding looks, and grow afraid ;
Like timid trav'lers in the night, they fear
Th' assault of foes, when not a friend is near. 10

In contest mighty and of conquest proud
Was Justice Bolt, impetuous, warm, and loud ;
His fame, his prowess all the country knew,
And disputants, with one so fierce, were few.
He was a younger son, for law design'd,
With dauntless look and persevering mind ;
While yet a clerk, for disputation famed,
No efforts tired him, and no conflicts tamed.

Scarcely he bade his master's desk adieu,
When both his brothers from the world withdrew. 20
An ample fortune he from them possess'd,
And was with saving care and prudence bless'd.
Now would he go and to the country give
Example how an English 'squire should live ;
How bounteous, yet how frugal man may be,
By a well-order'd hospitality ;
He would the rights of all so well maintain,
That none should idle be, and none complain.

All this and more he purpos'd—and what man
Could do, he did to realize his plan ; 30

THE DUMB ORATORS

But time convinced him that we cannot keep
 A breed of reasoners like a flock of sheep;
 For they, so far from following as we lead,
 Make that a cause why they will not proceed.
 Man will not follow where a rule is shown,
 But loves to take a method of his own;
 Explain the way with all your care and skill,
 This will he quit, if but to prove he will.—
 Yet had our Justice honour—and the crowd,
 Awed by his presence, their respect avow'd.

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In later years he found his heart incline,
 More than in youth, to gen'rous food and wine;
 But no indulgence check'd the powerful love
 He felt to teach, to argue, and reprove.

Meetings, or public calls, he never miss'd—
 To dictate often, always to assist.
 Oft he the clergy join'd, and not a cause
 Pertain'd to them but he could quote the laws;
 He upon tithes and residence display'd
 A fund of knowledge for the hearer's aid;
 And could on glebe and farming, wool and grain,
 A long discourse, without a pause, maintain.

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To his experience and his native sense
 He join'd a bold imperious eloquence;
 The grave, stern look of men inform'd and wise,
 A full command of feature, heart, and eyes,
 An awe-compelling frown, and fear-inspiring size.
 When at the table, not a guest was seen
 With appetite so ling'ring, or so keen;
 But when the outer man no more required,
 The inner waked, and he was man inspired.
 His subjects then were those, a subject true
 Presents in fairest form to public view;
 Of Church and State, of Law, with mighty strength
 Of words he spoke, in speech of mighty length;
 And now, into the vale of years declined,
 He hides too little of the monarch-mind;
 He kindles anger by untimely jokes,
 And opposition by contempt provokes;
 Mirth he suppresses by his awful frown,

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[]

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And humble spirits, by disdain, keeps down ;
Blamed by the mild, approved by the severe,
The prudent fly him, and the valiant fear.

For overbearing is his proud discourse,
And overwhelming of his voice the force ;
And overpowering is he when he shows
What floats upon a mind that always overflows.

This ready man at every meeting rose,
Something to hint, determine, or propose ;
And grew so fond of teaching, that he taught
Those who instruction needed not or sought. 80
Happy our hero, when he could excite
Some thoughtless talker to the wordy fight :
Let him a subject at his pleasure choose,
Physic or Law, Religion or the Muse ;
On all such themes he was prepared to shine,
Physician, poet, lawyer, and divine.

Hemm'd in by some tough argument, borne down
By press of language and the awful frown,
In vain for mercy shall the culprit plead ; 90
His crime is past, and sentence must proceed :
Ah ! suffering man, have patience, bear thy woes—
For lo ! the clock—at ten the Justice goes.

This powerful man, on business or to please
A curious taste, or weary grown of ease,
On a long journey travell'd many a mile
Westward, and halted midway in our isle ;
Content to view a city large and fair,
Though none had notice what a man was there !

Silent two days, he then began to long 100
Again to try a voice so loud and strong ;
To give his favourite topics some new grace,
And gain some glory in such distant place ;
To reap some present pleasure, and to sow
Seeds of fair fame, in after-time to grow :
Here will men say, " We heard, at such an hour,
" The best of speakers—wonderful his power."

Inquiry made, he found that day would meet
A learned club, and in the very street :
Knowledge to gain and give, was the design ; 110

THE DUMB ORATORS

To speak, to hearken, to debate, and dine :
This pleased our traveller, for he felt his force
In either way, to eat or to discourse.

Nothing more easy than to gain access
To men like these, with his polite address :
So he succeeded, and first look'd around,
To view his objects and to take his ground ;
And therefore silent chose awhile to sit,
Then enter boldly by some lucky hit,
Some observation keen or stroke severe,
To cause some wonder or excite some fear.

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Now, dinner past, no longer he suppress'd
His strong dislike to be a silent guest ;
Subjects and words were now at his command—
When disappointment frown'd on all he plann'd ;
For, hark !—he heard, amazed, on every side,
His church insulted and her priests belied ;
The laws reviled, the ruling power abused,
The land derided, and its foes excused :—
He heard and ponder'd.—What, to men so vile,
Should be his language ? For his threat'ning style
They were too many ;—if his speech were meek,
They would despise such poor attempts to speak :
At other times with every word at will,
He now sat lost, perplex'd, astonish'd, still.

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Here were Socinians, Deists, and indeed
All who, as foes to England's church, agreed ;
But still with creeds unlike, and some without a creed : } []
Here, too, fierce friends of liberty he saw,
Who own'd no prince and who obey no law ;
There were Reformers of each different sort,
Foes to the laws, the priesthood, and the court ;
Some on their favourite plans alone intent,
Some purely angry and malevolent :
The rash were proud to blame their country's laws ;
The vain, to seem supporters of a cause ;
One call'd for change that he would dread to see ;
Another sigh'd for Gallic liberty !
And numbers joining with the forward crew,
For no one reason—but that numbers do.

140

150

GEORGE CRABBE

"How," said the Justice, "can this trouble rise,
"This shame and pain, from creatures I despise?"
And conscience answer'd—"The prevailing cause
"Is thy delight in listening to applause;
"Here, thou art seated with a tribe, who spurn
"Thy favourite themes, and into laughter turn
"Thy fears and wishes; silent and obscure,
"Thyself, shalt thou the long harangue endure;
"And learn, by feeling, what it is to force
"On thy unwilling friends the long discourse. 160
"What though thy thoughts be just, and these, it seems,
"Are traitors' projects, idiots' empty schemes:
"Yet minds like bodies cramm'd, reject their food,
"Nor will be forced and tortured for their good!"

At length, a sharp, shrewd, sallow man arose,
And begg'd he briefly might his mind disclose;
"It was his duty, in these worst of times,
"T' inform the govern'd of their rulers' crimes."
This pleasant subject to attend, they each
Prepared to listen, and forbore to teach. 170

Then, voluble and fierce, the wordy man
Through a long chain of favourite horrors ran:—
First, of the church, from whose enslaving power
He was deliver'd, and he bless'd the hour;
"Bishops and deans, and prebendaries all,"
He said, "were cattle fatt'ning in the stall;
"Slothful and porsy, insolent and mean,
"Were every bishop, prebendary, dean,
"And wealthy rector; curates, poorly paid,
"Were only dull;—he would not them upbraid." 180

From priests he turn'd to canons, creeds, and prayers,
Rubrics and rules, and all our church affairs;
Churches themselves, desk, pulpit, altar, all
The Justice revered—and pronounced their fall.

Then from religion Hammond turn'd his view,
To give our rulers the correction due;
Not one wise action had these triflers plann'd;
There was, it seem'd, no wisdom in the land;
Save in this patriot tribe, who meet at times
To show the statesman's errors and his crimes. 190

THE DUMB ORATORS

Now here was Justice Bolt compell'd to sit,
To hear the deist's scorn, the rebel's wit ;
The fact mis-stated, the envenom'd lie,
And staring, spell-bound, made not one reply.

Then were our laws abused—and with the laws,
All who prepare, defend, or judge a cause :
“We have no lawyer whom a man can trust,”
Proceeded Hammond—“if the laws were just ;
“But they are evil ; 'tis the savage state
“Is only good, and ours sophisticate !
“See ! the free creatures in their woods and plains,
“Where without laws each happy monarch reigns,
“King of himself—while we a number dread,
“By slaves commanded and by dunces led ;
“Oh, let the name with either state agree—
“Savage our own we'll name, and civil theirs shall be.”

200

The silent Justice still astonish'd sate,
And wonder'd much whom he was gazing at ;
Twice he essay'd to speak—but in a cough
The faint, indignant, dying speech went off :
“But who is this ?” thought he—“a dæmon vile,
“With wicked meaning and a vulgar style :
“Hammond they call him ; they can give the name
“Of man to devils.—Why am I so tame ?
“Why crush I not the viper ?”—Fear replied,
“Watch him awhile, and let his strength be tried ;
“He will be foil'd, if man ; but if his aid
“Be from beneath, 'tis well to be afraid.”

210

“We are call'd free !” said Hammond—“doleful times
“When rulers add their insult to their crimes ;
“For, should our scorn expose each powerful vice,
“It would be libel, and we pay the price.”

220

Thus with licentious words the man went on,
Proving that liberty of speech was gone ;
That all were slaves—nor had we better chance
For better times than as allies to France.

Loud groan'd the stranger—Why, he must relate,
And own'd, “In sorrow for his country's fate.”

“Nay, she were safe,” the ready man replied,
“Might patriots rule her, and could reasoners guide ;

230

GEORGE CRABBE

"When all to vote, to speak, to teach, are free,
 "Whate'er their creeds or their opinions be;
 "When books of statutes are consumed in flames,
 "And courts and copyholds are empty names;
 "Then will be times of joy—but ere they come,
 "Havock, and war, and blood must be our doom."

The man here paused—then loudly for reform
 He call'd, and hail'd the prospect of the storm;
 The wholesome blast, the fertilizing flood—
 Peace gain'd by tumult, plenty bought with blood: 240
 Sharp means, he own'd; but when the land's disease
 Asks cure complete, no med'cines are like these.

Our Justice now, more led by fear than rage,
 Saw it in vain with madness to engage;
 With imps of darkness no man seeks to fight,
 Knaves to instruct, or set deceivers right.
 Then, as the daring speech denounced these woes,
 Sick at the soul, the grieving guest arose;
 Quick on the board his ready cash he threw,
 And from the dæmons to his closet flew. 250

There when secured, he pray'd with earnest zeal,
 That all they wish'd these patriot-souls might feel;
 "Let them to France, their darling country, haste,
 "And all the comforts of a Frenchman taste;
 "Let them his safety, freedom, pleasure know,
 "Feel all their rulers on the land bestow;
 "And be at length dismiss'd by one unerring blow; }
 "Not hack'd and hew'd by one afraid to strike, }
 "But shorn by that which shears all men alike;
 "Nor, as in Britain, let them curse delay 260 }
 "Of law, but borne without a form away— }
 "Suspected, tried, condemn'd, and carted in a day; }
 "Oh! let them taste what they so much approve,
 "These strong fierce freedoms of the land they love¹."

¹ The reader will perceive in these and the preceding verses allusions to the state of France, as that country was circumstanced some years since, rather than as it appears to be in the present date; several years elapsing between the alarm of the loyal magistrate on the occasion now related, and a subsequent event that farther illustrates the remark with which the narrative commences.

THE DUMB ORATORS

Home came our hero, to forget no more
The fear he felt and ever most deplore:
For, though he quickly join'd his friends again,
And could with decent force his themes maintain,
Still it occur'd that, in a luckless time,
He fail'd to fight with heresy and crime; 270
It was observed his words were not so strong,
His tones so powerful, his harangues so long,
As in old times—for he would often drop
The lofty look, and of a sudden stop;
When conscience whisper'd, that he once was still,
And let the wicked triumph at their will;
And therefore now, when not a foe was near,
He had no right so valiant to appear.

Some years had pass'd, and he perceived his fears
Yield to the spirit of his earlier years— 280
When at a meeting, with his friends beside,
He saw an object that awaked his pride;
His shame, wrath, vengeance, indignation—all
Man's harsher feelings did that sight recall.

For lo! beneath him fix'd, our man of law
That lawless man the foe of order saw—
Once fear'd, now scorn'd; once dreaded, now abhorr'd;
A wordy man, and evil every word.
Again he gazed—"It is," said he, "the same;
"Caught and secure: his master owes him shame:" 290
So thought our hero, who each instant found
His courage rising, from the numbers round.

As when a felon has escaped and fled,
So long, that law conceives the culprit dead;
And back recall'd her myrmidons, intent
On some new game, and with a stronger scent;
Till she beholds him in a place, where none
Could have conceived the culprit would have gone;
There he sits upright in his seat, secure,
As one whose conscience is correct and pure; 300
This rouses anger for the old offence,
And scorn for all such seeming and pretence:
So on this Hammond look'd our hero bold,
Rememb'ring well that vile offence of old;

GEORGE CRABBE

And now he saw the rebel dared t' intrude
 Among the pure, the loyal, and the good ;
 The crime provoked his wrath, the folly stirr'd his blood. []
 Nor wonder was it if so strange a sight
 Caused joy with vengeance, terror with delight ;
 Terror like this a tiger might create, 310
 A joy like that to see his captive state,
 At once to know his force and then decree his fate. []

Hammond, much praised by numerous friends, was come
 To read his lectures, so admired at home :
 Historic lectures, where he loved to mix
 His free plain hints on modern politics.
 Here, he had heard, that numbers had design,
 Their business finish'd, to sit down and dine ;
 This gave him pleasure, for he judg'd it right
 To show by day, that he could speak at night. 320
 Rash the design—for he perceived, too late,
 Not one approving friend beside him sate ;
 The greater number, whom he traced around,
 Were men in black, and he conceived they frown'd.
 "I will not speak," he thought ; "no pearls of mine
 "Shall be presented to this herd of swine ;"
 Not this avail'd him, when he cast his eye
 On Justice Bolt ; he could not fight, nor fly.
 He saw a man to whom he gave the pain,
 Which now he felt must be return'd again, 330
 His conscience told him with what keen delight
 He, at that time, enjoy'd a stranger's fright ;
 That stranger now befriended—he alone,
 For all his insult, friendless, to atone ;
 Now he could feel it cruel that a heart
 Should be distress'd, and none to take its part ;
 "Though one by one," said Pride, "I would defy
 "Much greater men, yet meeting every eye,
 "I do confess a fear—but he will pass me by." []

Vain hope ! the Justice saw the foe's distress,
 With exultation he could not suppress ;
 He felt the fish was hook'd—and so forbore,
 In playful spite, to draw it to the shore.
 Hammond look'd round again ; but none were near,

THE DUMB ORATORS

With friendly smile, to still his growing fear ;
But all above him seem'd a solemn row
Of priests and deacons, so they seem'd below ;
He wonder'd who his right-hand man might be—
Vicar of Holt cum Uppingham was he ;
And who the man of that dark frown possess'd— 350
Rector of Bradley and of Barton-west ;
“A pluralist,” he growl'd—but check'd the word,
That warfare might not, by his zeal, be stirr'd.

But now began the man above to show
Fierce looks and threat'nings to the man below ;
Who had some thoughts his peace by flight to seek—
But how then lecture, if he dared not speak!—

Now as the Justice for the war prepared,
He seem'd just then to question if he dared :
“He may resist, although his power be small, 360
“And growing desperate may defy us all ;
“One dog attack, and he prepares for flight—
“Resist another, and he strives to bite ;
“Nor can I say, if this rebellious cur
“Will fly for safety, or will scorn to stir.”
Alarm'd by this, he lash'd his soul to rage,
Burn'd with strong shame, and hurried to engage.

As a male turkey straggling on the green,
When by fierce harriers, terriers, mongrels seen, 370
He feels the insult of the noisy train,
And sculks aside, though moved by much disdain ;
But when that turkey, at his own barn-door,
Sees one poor straying puppy and no more,
(A foolish puppy who had left the pack,
Thoughtless what foe was threat'ning at his back,)
He moves about, as ship prepared to sail,
He hoists his proud rotundity of tail,
The half-seal'd eyes and changeful neck he shows,
Where, in its quick'ning colours, vengeance glows ;
From red to blue the pendant wattles turn, 380
Blue mix'd with red, as matches when they burn ;
And thus th' intruding snarler to oppose,
Urged by enkindling wrath, he gobbling goes.

So look'd our hero in his wrath, his cheeks

GEORGE CRABBE

Flush'd with fresh fires and glow'd in tingling streaks ;
His breath by passion's force awhile restrain'd,
Like a stopp'd current, greater force regain'd ;
So spoke, so look'd he, every eye and ear
Were fix'd to view him, or were turn'd to hear.

"My friends, you know me, you can witness all, 390
"How, urged by passion, I restrain my gall ;
"And every motive to revenge withstand—
"Save when I hear abused my native land.

"Is it not known, agreed, confirm'd, confess'd,
"That of all people, we are govern'd best ?
"We have the force of monarchies ; are free,
"As the most proud republicans can be ;
"And have those prudent counsels that arise
"In grave and cautious aristocracies ;
"And live there those, in such all-glorious state, 400
"Traitors protected in the land they hate ?
"Rebels, still warring with the laws that give
"To them subsistence ?—Yes, such wretches live.

"Ours is a church reform'd, and now no more
"Is aught for man to mend or to restore ;
"'Tis pure in doctrines, 'tis correct in creeds,
"Has nought redundant, and it nothing needs ;
"No evil is therein—no wrinkle, spot,
"Stain, blame, or blemish :—I affirm there's not.

"All this you know—now mark what once befell, 410
"With grief I bore it, and with shame I tell ;
"I was entrapp'd—yes, so it came to pass,
"'Mid heathen rebels, a tumultuous class ;
"Each to his country bore a hellish mind,
"Each like his neighbour was of curs'd kind ;
"The land that nursed them they blasphemed ; the laws,
"Their sovereign's glory, and their country's cause ;
"And who their mouth, their master-fiend, and who
"Rebellion's oracle ?——You, caitiff, you !"

He spoke, and standing stretch'd his mighty arm, 420
And fix'd the man of words, as by a charm.

"How raved that railer ! Sure some hellish power
"Restrain'd my tongue in that delirious hour,
"Or I had hurl'd the shame and vengeance due

THE DUMB ORATORS

"On him, the guide of that infuriate crew ;
"But to mine eyes such dreadful looks appear'd,
"Such mingled yell of lying words I heard,
"That I conceived around were dæmons all,
"And till I fled the house, I fear'd its fall.

"Oh! could our country from our coasts expel 430
"Such foes! to nourish those who wish her well :
"This her mild laws forbid, but we may still
"From us eject them by our sovereign will ;
"This let us do."—He said, and then began
A gentler feeling for the silent man ;
Ev'n in our hero's mighty soul arose
A touch of pity for experienced woes ;
But this was transient, and with angry eye
He sternly look'd, and paused for a reply.

'Twas then the man of many words would speak— 440
But, in his trial, had them all to seek :
To find a friend he look'd the circle round,
But joy or scorn in every feature found ;
He sipp'd his wine, but in those times of dread
Wine only adds confusion to the head ;
In doubt he reason'd with himself—"And how
"Harangue at night, if I be silent now?"
From pride and praise received he sought to draw
Courage to speak, but still remain'd the awe ;
One moment rose he with a forced disdain, 450
And then, abash'd, sunk sadly down again ;
While in our hero's glance he seem'd to read,
"Slave and insurgent! what hast thou to plead?"—

By desperation urged, he now began :
"I seek no favour—I—the Rights of Man!
"Claim ; and I—nay!—but give me leave—and I
"Insist—a man—that is—and, in reply,
"I speak."—Alas! each new attempt was vain :
Confused he stood, he sate, he rose again ;
At length he growl'd defiance, sought the door, 460
Cursed the whole synod, and was seen no more.

"Laud we," said Justice Bolt, "the Powers above ;
"Thus could our speech the sturdiest foe remove."
Exulting now he gain'd new strength of fame,

GEORGE CRABBE

And lost all feelings of defeat and shame.

“He dared not strive, you witness’d—dared not lift

“His voice, nor drive at his accursed drift :

“So all shall tremble, wretches who oppose

“Our church or state—thus be it to our foes.”

He spoke, and, seated with his former air,

470

Look’d his full self, and fill’d his ample chair ;

Took one full bumper to each favourite cause,

And dwelt all night on politics and laws,

With high applauding voice, that gain’d him high applause. []

TALE II.

THE PARTING HOUR.

I did not take my leave of him, but had
Most pretty things to say: ere I could tell him
How I would think of him, at certain hours,
Such thoughts and such [.....]
.....] or ere I could
Give him that parting kiss, which I had set
Betwixt two charming words—comes in my father—
Cymbeline, A& I. Scene [3.]

Grief hath changed me since you saw me last,
And careful hours with Time's deformed hand
Have written strange defeatures [in] my face.
Comedy of Errors, A& V. Scene 1.

Oh! if thou be the same [Ægeon], speak,
And speak unto the same [Æmilia].
Comedy of Errors, A& V Scene [1.]

I ran it through, ev'n from my boyish days
To the very moment that [he bade] me tell it,
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents, by flood, and field;
Of being taken by [the] insolent foe
And sold to slavery.
Othello, A& I. Scene 3.

An old man, broken with the storms of [state],
Is come to lay his weary bones among [ye];
Give him a little earth for charity.
Henry VIII. A& IV. Scene 2.

TALE II.

THE PARTING HOUR.

MINUTELY trace man's life ; year after year,
Through all his days let all his deeds appear,
And then, though some may in that life be strange,
Yet there appears no vast nor sudden change ;
The links that bind those various deeds are seen,
And no mysterious void is left between.

But let these binding links be all destroy'd,
All that through years he suffer'd or enjoy'd ;
Let that vast gap be made, and then behold—
This was the youth, and he is thus when old ;
Then we at once the work of Time survey,
And in an instant see a life's decay :
Pain[s] mix'd with pity in our bosoms rise,
And sorrow takes new sadness from surprise.

Beneath yon tree, observe an ancient pair—
A sleeping man ; a woman in her chair,
Watching his looks with kind and pensive air ;
No wife, nor sister she, nor is the name
Nor kindred of this friendly pair the same ;
Yet so allied are they, that few can feel
Her constant, warm, unwearied, anxious zeal,
Their years and woes, although they long have loved,
Keep their good name and conduct unproved ;
Thus life's small comforts they together share,
And while life lingers for the grave prepare.

No other subjects on their spirits press,
Nor gain such int'rest as the past distress ;

THE PARTING HOUR

Grievous events that from the mem'ry drive
Life's common cares, and those alone survive,
Mix with each thought, in every action share,
Darken each dream, and blend with every prayer.

30

To David Booth, his fourth and last-born boy,
Allen his name, was more than common joy;
And as the child grew up, there seem'd in him
A more than common life in every limb;
A strong and handsome stripling he became,
And the gay spirit answer'd to the frame;
A lighter, happier lad was never seen,
For ever easy, cheerful, or serene;
His early love he fix'd upon a fair
And gentle maid—they were a handsome pair.

40

They at an infant-school together play'd,
Where the foundation of their love was laid;
The boyish champion would his choice attend
In every sport, in every fray defend.
As prospects open'd and as life advanced,
They walk'd together, they together danced;
On all occasions, from their early years,
They mix'd their joys and sorrows, hopes and fears;
Each heart was anxious, till it could impart
Its daily feelings to its kindred heart;
As years increased, unnumber'd petty wars
Broke out between them; jealousies and jars;
Causeless indeed, and follow'd by a peace,
That gave to love—growth, vigour, and increase.
Whilst yet a boy, when other minds are void,
Domestic thoughts young Allen's hours employ'd;
Judith in gaining hearts had no concern,
Rather intent the matron's part to learn;
Thus early prudent and sedate they grew,
While lovers, thoughtful—and, though children, true.
To either parents not a day appear'd,
When with this love they might have interfered:
Childish at first, they cared not to restrain;
And strong at last, they saw restriction vain;
Nor knew they when that passion to reprove—
Now idle fondness, now resistless love.

50

60

29

GEORGE CRABBE

So, while the waters rise, the children tread
On the broad estuary's sandy bed ;
But soon the channel fills, from side to side
Comes danger rolling with the deep'ning tide ;
Yet none who saw the rapid current flow
Could the first instant of that danger know.

70

The lovers waited till the time should come
When they together could possess a home :
In either house were men and maids unwed,
Hopes to be soothed, and tempers to be led.
Then Allen's mother of his favourite maid
Spoke from the feelings of a mind afraid :

"Dress and amusements were her sole employ,"
She said—"entangling her deluded boy ;"
And yet, in truth, a mother's jealous love
Had much imagined and could little prove ;
Judith had beauty—and, if vain, was kind,
Discreet, and mild, and had a serious mind.

80

Dull was their prospect—when the lovers met,
They said, we must not—dare not venture yet :
"Oh ! could I labour for thee," Allen cried,
"Why should our friends be thus dissatisfied ?
"On my own arm I could depend, but they
"Still urge obedience—must I yet obey ?"
Poor Judith felt the grief, but grieving begg'd delay.

90 }
[]

At length a prospect came that seem'd to smile,
And faintly woo them, from a Western Isle.
A kinsman there a widow's hand had gain'd,
"Was old, was rich, and childless yet remain'd ;
"Would some young Booth to his affairs attend,
"And wait awhile, he might expect a friend."
The elder brothers, who were not in love,
Fear'd the false seas, unwilling to remove ;
But the young Allen, an enamour'd boy,
Eager an independence to enjoy,
Would through all perils seek it—by the sea—
Through labour, danger, pain, or slavery.
The faithful Judith his design approved ;
For both were sanguine, they were young and loved.
The mother's slow consent was then obtain'd ;

100

THE PARTING HOUR

The time arrived, to part alone remain'd.
All things prepared, on the expected day
Was seen the vessel anchor'd in the bay. 110
From her would seamen in the evening come,
To take th' advent'rous Allen from his home;
With his own friends the final day he pass'd,
And every painful hour, except the last.
The grieving father urged the cheerful glass,
To make the moments with less sorrow pass;
Intent the mother look'd upon her son,
And wish'd th' assent withdrawn, the deed undone;
The younger sister, as he took his way,
Hung on his coat, and begg'd for more delay : 120
But his own Judith call'd him to the shore,
Whom he must meet, for they might meet no more ;—
And there he found her—faithful, mournful, true,
Weeping and waiting for a last adieu !
The ebbing tide had left the sand, and there
Moved with slow steps the melancholy pair :
Sweet were the painful moments—but how sweet,
And without pain, when they again should meet !
Now either spoke, as hope and fear impress'd
Each their alternate triumph in the breast. 130
Distance alarm'd the maid—she cried, “ ’Tis far ! ”
And danger too—“ it is a time of war.
“ Then, in those countries are diseases strange,
“ And women gay, and men are prone to change ;
“ What, then, may happen in a year, when things
“ Of vast importance every moment brings !
“ But hark ! an oar ! ” she cried, yet none appear'd—
’Twas love’s mistake, who fancied what it fear’d ;
And she continued—“ Do, my Allen, keep
“ Thy heart from evil, let thy passions sleep ; 140
“ Believe it good, nay glorious, to prevail,
“ And stand in safety where so many fail ;
“ And do not, Allen, or for shame, or pride,
“ Thy faith abjure, or thy profession hide ;
“ Can I believe *his* love will lasting prove,
“ Who has no rev’rence for the God I love ?
“ I know thee well ! how good thou art and kind ;

GEORGE CRABBE

"But strong the passions that invade thy mind.—
 "Now, what to me hath Allen to commend?"—
 "Upon my mother," said the youth, "attend; 150
 "Forget her spleen, and in my place appear;
 "Her love to me will make my Judith dear:
 "Oft I shall think (such comfort lovers seek),
 "Who speaks of me, and fancy what they speak;
 "Then write on all occasions, always dwell
 "On hope's fair prospects, and be kind and well,
 "And ever choose the fondest, tenderest style."
 She answer'd, "No," but answer'd with a smile.
 "And now, my Judith, at so sad a time,
 "Forgive my fear, and call it not my crime; 160
 "When with our youthful neighbours 'tis thy chance
 "To meet in walks, the visit or the dance,
 "When every lad would on my lass attend,
 "Choose not a smooth designer for a friend;
 "That fawning Philip!—nay, be not severe,
 "A rival's hope must cause a lover's fear."
 Displeased she felt, and might in her reply
 Have mix'd some anger, but the boat was nigh,
 Now truly heard!—it soon was full in sight;—
 Now the sad farewell, and the long good-night; 170
 For, see!—his friends come hast'ning to the beach,
 And now the gunwale is within the reach;
 "Adieu!—farewell!—remember!"—and what more
 Affection taught, was utter'd from the shore!
 But Judith left them with a heavy heart,
 Took a last view, and went to weep apart!
 And now his friends went slowly from the place,
 Where she stood still, the dashing oar to trace,
 Till all were silent!—for the youth she pray'd,
 And softly then return'd the weeping maid. 180
 They parted, thus by hope and fortune led,
 And Judith's hours in pensive pleasure fled.
 But when return'd the youth?—the youth no more
 Return'd exulting to his native shore.
 But forty years were past, and then there came
 A worn-out man with wither'd limbs and lame,
 His mind oppress'd with woes, and bent with age his frame: []

THE PARTING HOUR

Yes! old and grieved, and trembling with decay,
Was Allen landing in his native bay,
Willing his breathless form should blend with kindred clay. }]
In an autumnal eve he left the beach, 191

In such an eve he chanced the port to reach.
He was alone; he press'd the very place
Of the sad parting, of the last embrace:
There stood his parents, there retired the maid,
So fond, so tender, and so much afraid;
And on that spot, through many a year, his mind
Turn'd mournful back, half sinking, half resign'd.

No one was present; of its crew bereft,
A single boat was in the billows left; 200
Sent from some anchor'd vessel in the bay,
At the returning tide to sail away.

O'er the black stern the moonlight softly play'd,
The loosen'd foresail flapping in the shade;
All silent else on shore; but from the town
A drowsy peal of distant bells came down;
From the tall houses here and there, a light
Served some confused remembrance to excite:
"There," he observed, and new emotions felt,
"Was my first home—and yonder Judith dwelt; 210
"Dead! dead are all! I long—I fear to know,"
He said, and walk'd impatient, and yet slow.

Sudden there broke upon his grief a noise
Of merry tumult and of vulgar joys:
Seamen returning to their ship, were come,
With idle numbers straying from their home;
Allen among them mix'd, and in the old
Strove some familiar features to behold;
While fancy aided memory:—"Man! what cheer?"
A sailor cried; "Art thou at anchor here?" 220
Faintly he answer'd, and then tried to trace
Some youthful features in some aged face:
A swarthy matron he beheld, and thought
She might unfold the very truths he sought;
Confused and trembling, he the dame address'd:
"The Booths! yet live they?" pausing and oppress'd;
Then spake again:—"Is there no ancient man,

GEORGE CRABBE

"David his name?—assist me, if you can.—
"Flemmings there were—and Judith, doth she live?"
The woman gazed, nor could an answer give;
Yet wond'ring stood, and all were silent by,
Feeling a strange and solemn sympathy.

230

The woman musing said—"She knew full well
"Where the old people came at last to dwell;
"They had a married daughter and a son,
"But they were dead, and now remain'd not one."

"Yes," said an elder, who had paused intent
On days long past, "there was a sad event;—
"One of these Booths—it was my mother's tale—

240

"Here left his lass, I know not where to sail;
"She saw their parting, and observed the pain;
"But never came th' unhappy man again."

"The ship was captured"—Allen meekly said,
"And what became of the forsaken maid?"

The woman answer'd: "I remember now,
"She used to tell the lasses of her vow,
"And of her lover's loss, and I have seen
"The gayest hearts grow sad where she has been;
"Yet in her grief she married, and was made
"Slave to a wretch, whom meekly she obey'd
"And early buried—but I know no more.

250

"And hark! our friends are hast'ning to the shore."

Allen soon found a lodging in the town,
And walk'd, a man unnoticed, up and down.
This house, and this, he knew, and thought a face
He sometimes could among a number trace;
Of names remember'd there remain'd a few,
But of no favourites, and the rest were new;
A merchant's wealth, when Allen went to sea,
Was reckon'd boundless.—Could he living be?
Or lived his son? for one he had, the heir
To a vast business, and a fortune fair.

260

No! but that heir's poor widow, from her shed,
With crutches went to take her dole of bread.
There was a friend whom he had left a boy,
With hope to sail the master of a hoy;
Him, after many a stormy day, he found

THE PARTING HOUR

With his great wish, his life's whole purpose, crown'd.
This hoy's proud captain look'd in Allen's face ;—
"Yours is, my friend," said he, "a woful case ;
"We cannot all succeed ; I now command
"The Betsy sloop, and am not much at land ;
"But when we meet, you shall your story tell
"Of foreign parts—I bid you now farewell !"

270

Allen so long had left his native shore,
He saw but few whom he had seen before ;
The older people, as they met him, cast
A pitying look, oft speaking as they pass'd :—
"The man is Allen Booth, and it appears
"He dwelt among us in his early years ;
"We see the name engraved upon the stones,
"Where this poor wanderer means to lay his bones."
Thus where he lived and loved—unhappy change !—
He seems a stranger, and finds all are strange.

280

But now a widow, in a village near,
Chanced of the melancholy man to hear ;
Old as she was, to Judith's bosom came
Some strong emotions at the well-known name ;
He was her much-loved Allen, she had stay'd
Ten troubled years, a sad afflicted maid ;
Then was she wedded, of his death assured,
And much of mis'ry in her lot endured ;
Her husband died ; her children sought their bread
In various places, and to her were dead.

290

The once fond lovers met ; not grief nor age,
Sickness or pain, their hearts could disengage :
Each had immediate confidence ; a friend
Both now beheld, on whom they might depend :

"Now is there one to whom I can express
"My nature's weakness and my soul's distress."

300

Allen look'd up, and with impatient heart :—

"Let me not lose thee—never let us part ;
"So Heaven this comfort to my sufferings give,
"It is not all distress to think and live."

Thus Allen spoke—for time had not removed
The charms attach'd to one so fondly loved ;
Who with more health, the mistress of their cot,

GEORGE CRABBE

Labours to soothe the evils of his lot.
To her, to her alone, his various fate,
At various times, 'tis comfort to relate ;
And yet his sorrow she too loves to hear
What wrings her bosom, and compels the tear.

310

First he related how he left the shore,
Alarm'd with fears that they should meet no more ;
Then, ere the ship had reach'd her purposed course,
They met and yielded to the Spanish force ;
Then 'cross th' Atlantic seas they bore their prey,
Who grieving landed from their sultry bay ;
And, marching many a burning league, he found
Himself a slave upon a miner's ground :
There a good priest his native language spoke,
And gave some ease to his tormenting yoke ;
Kindly advanced him in his master's grace,
And he was station'd in an easier place.

320

There, hopeless ever to escape the land,
He to a Spanish maiden gave his hand ;
In cottage shelter'd from the blaze of day
He saw his happy infants round him play ;
Where summer shadows, made by lofty trees,
Waved o'er his seat, and soothed his reveries ;
E'en then he thought of England, nor could sigh,
But his fond Isabel demanded, "Why?"

330

Grieved by the story, she the sigh repaid,
And wept in pity for the English maid :
Thus twenty years were pass'd, and pass'd his views
Of further bliss, for he had wealth to lose.
His friend now dead, some foe had dared to paint
"His faith as tainted : he his spouse would taint ;
"Make all his children infidels, and found
"An English heresy on Christian ground."

340

"Whilst I was poor," said Allen, "none would care
"What my poor notions of religion were ;
"None ask'd me whom I worshipp'd, how I pray'd,
"If due obedience to the laws were paid :
"My good adviser taught me to be still,
"Nor to make converts had I power or will.
"I preach'd no foreign doctrine to my wife,

THE PARTING HOUR

“And never mention’d Luther in my life;
“I, all they said, say what they would, allow’d,
“And when the fathers bade me bow, I bow’d;
“Their forms I follow’d, whether well or sick,
“And was a most obedient Catholic.
“But I had money, and these pastors found
“My notions vague, heretical, unsound:
“A wicked book they seized; the very Turk
“Could not have read a more pernicious work;
“To me pernicious, who if it were good
“Or evil question’d not, nor understood:
“Oh! had I little but the book possess’d,
“I might have read it, and enjoy’d my rest.”

350

360

Alas! poor Allen, through his wealth was seen
Crimes that by poverty conceal’d had been:
Faults that in dusty pictures rest unknown
Are in an instant through the varnish shown.

He told their cruel mercy: how at last,
In Christian kindness for the merits past,
They spared his forfeit life, but bade him fly,
Or for his crime and contumacy die;
Fly from all scenes, all objects of delight;
His wife, his children, weeping in his sight,
All urging him to flee, he fled, and cursed his flight.

370 }
[]

He next related how he found a way,
Guideless and grieving, to Campeachy Bay:
There in the woods he wrought, and there, among
Some lab’ring seamen, heard his native tongue.
The sound, one moment, broke upon his pain
With joyful force; he long’d to hear again;
Again he heard; he seized an offer’d hand,
“And when beheld you last our native land?”
He cry’d, “and in what county? quickly say!”—
The seamen answer’d, strangers all were they;
One only at his native port had been;
He, landing once, the quay and church had seen,
For that esteem’d; but nothing more he knew.
Still more to know, would Allen join the crew,
Sail where they sail’d; and, many a peril past,
They at his kinsman’s isle their anchor cast;

380

GEORGE CRABBE

But him they found not, nor could one relate
Aught of his will, his wish, or his estate.

This grieved not Allen; then again he sail'd
For England's coast, again his fate prevail'd :
War raged, and he, an active man and strong,
Was soon impress'd, and served his country long.
By various shores he pass'd, on various seas,
Never so happy as when void of ease.—

And then he told how, in a calm distress'd,
Day after day his soul was sick of rest ;
When as a log upon the deep they stood,
Then roved his spirit to the inland wood ;
Till, while awake, he dream'd, that on the seas
Were his loved home, the hill, the stream, the trees.
He gazed, he pointed to the scenes :—"There stand
"My wife, my children, 'tis my lovely land ;
"See! there my dwelling—oh! delicious scene
"Of my best life—unhand me—are ye men?"

And thus the frenzy ruled him, till the wind
Brush'd the fond pictures from the stagnant mind.

He told of bloody fights, and how at length
The rage of battle gave his spirits strength.

'Twas in the Indian seas his limb he lost,
And he was left half-dead upon the coast ;
But living gain'd, 'mid rich aspiring men,
A fair subsistence by his ready pen.

"Thus," he continued, "pass'd unvaried years,
"Without events producing hopes or fears."

Augmented pay procured him decent wealth,
But years advancing undermined his health ;
Then oft-times in delightful dream he flew
To England's shore, and scenes his childhood knew :

He saw his parents, saw his fav'rite maid,
No feature wrinkled, not a charm decay'd ;

And, thus excited, in his bosom rose
A wish so strong, it baffled his repose ;
Anxious he felt on English earth to lie ;
To view his native soil, and there to die.

He then described the gloom, the dread he found,
When first he landed on the chosen ground,

THE PARTING HOUR

Where undefined was all he hoped and fear'd,
And how confused and troubled all appear'd ;
His thoughts in past and present scenes employ'd, 430
All views in future blighted and destroy'd :
His were a medley of bewild'ring themes,
Sad as realities, and wild as dreams.

Here his relation closes, but his mind
Flies back again, some resting-place to find ;
Thus silent, musing through the day, he sees
His children sporting by those lofty trees,
Their mother singing in the shady scene,
Where the fresh springs burst o'er the lively green ;—
So strong his eager fancy, he affrights 440
The faithful widow by its powerful flights ;
For what disturbs him he aloud will tell,
And cry—" 'Tis she, my wife ! my Isabel !
"Where are my children ?"—Judith grieves to hear
How the soul works in sorrows so severe ;
Assiduous all his wishes to attend,
Deprived of much, he yet may boast a friend ;
Watch'd by her care, in sleep, his spirit takes
Its flight, and watchful finds her when he wakes.

'Tis now her office ; her attention see ! 450
While her friend sleeps beneath that shading tree,
Careful she guards him from the glowing heat,
And pensive muses at her Allen's feet.

And where is he ? Ah ! doubtless in those scenes
Of his best days, amid the vivid greens,
Fresh with unnumber'd rills, where ev'ry gale
Breathes the rich fragrance of the neighb'ring vale ;
Smiles not his wife, and listens as there comes
The night-bird's music from the thick'ning glooms ?
And as he sits with all these treasures nigh, 460
Blaze not with fairy light the phosphor-fly,
When like a sparkling gem it wheels illumined by ? []
This is the joy that now so plainly speaks
In the warm transient flushing of his cheeks ;
For he is list'ning to the fancied noise
Of his own children, eager in their joys :
All this he feels, a dream's delusive bliss

GEORGE CRABBE

Gives the expression, and the glow like this.

And now his Judith lays her knitting by,

These strong emotions in her friend to spy ;

For she can fully of their nature deem——

But see ! he breaks the long-protracted theme,

And wakes and cries—"My God ! 'twas but a dream." []

470

TALE III.

THE GENTLEMAN FARMER.

Pause [there . . .]

And weigh thy value with an even hand;
If thou beest rated by thy estimation,
Thou dost deserve enough.

Merchant of Venice, Act II. Scene 7.

Because I will not do them wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself
the right to trust none; and the fine is (for which I may go the finer),
I will live a bachelor.

Much Ado about Nothing, Act I. Scene [1].

Throw physic to the dogs, I'll none of it.

Macbeth, Act V. Scene 3.

His promises are, as he then was, mighty;
And his performance, as he now is, nothing.

Henry VIII. Act IV. Scene 2.

TALE III.

THE GENTLEMAN FARMER.

GWYN was a farmer, whom the farmers all,
Who dwelt around, the Gentleman would call;
Whether in pure humility or pride,
They only knew, and they would not decide.

Far diff'rent he from that dull plodding tribe,
Whom it was his amusement to describe;
Creatures no more enliven'd than a clod,
But treading still as their dull fathers trod;
Who lived in times when not a man had seen
Corn sown by drill, or thresh'd by a machine: 10
He was of those whose skill assigns the prize
For creatures fed in pens, and stalls, and sties;
And who, in places where improvers meet,
To fill the land with fatness, had a seat;
Who in large mansions live like petty kings,
And speak of farms but as amusing things;
Who plans encourage, and who journals keep,
And talk with lords about a breed of sheep.

Two are the species in this genus known;
One, who is rich in his profession grown, 20
Who yearly finds his ample stores increase,
From fortune's favours and a favouring lease;
Who rides his hunter, who his house adorns;
Who drinks his wine, and his disbursements scorns;
Who freely lives, and loves to show he can—

THE GENTLEMAN FARMER

This is the farmer, made the gentleman.

The second species from the world is sent,
Tired with its strife, or with his wealth content ;
In books and men beyond the former read,
To farming solely by a passion led, 30
Or by a fashion ; curious in his land ;
Now planning much, now changing what he plann'd ;
Pleased by each trial, not by failures vex'd,
And ever certain to succeed the next ;
Quick to resolve, and easy to persuade—
This is the gentleman, a farmer made.

Gwyn was of these ; he from the world withdrew
Early in life, his reasons known to few ;
Some disappointment said, some pure good sense,
The love of land, the press of indolence ; 40
His fortune known, and coming to retire,
If not a farmer, men had call'd him 'squire.

Forty and five his years, no child or wife
Cross'd the still tenour of his chosen life ;
Much land he purchased, planted far around,
And let some portions of superfluous ground
To farmers near him, not displeased to say,
"My tenants," nor, "our worthy landlord," they.

Fix'd in his farm, he soon display'd his skill
In small-boned lambs, the horse-hoe, and the drill ; 50
From these he rose to themes of nobler kind,
And show'd the riches of a fertile mind ;
To all around their visits he repaid,
And thus his mansion and himself display'd.
His rooms were stately, rather fine than neat,
And guests politely call'd his house a seat ;
At much expense was each apartment graced,
His taste was gorgeous, but it still was taste ;
In full festoons the crimson curtains fell,
The sofas rose in bold elastic swell ; 60
Mirrors in gilded frames display'd the tints
Of glowing carpets and of colour'd prints ;
The weary eye saw every object shine,
And all was costly, fanciful, and fine.

As with his friends he pass'd the social hours,

GEORGE CRABBE

His generous spirit scorn'd to hide its powers ;
Powers unexpected, for his eye and air
Gave no sure signs that eloquence was there ;
Oft he began with sudden fire and force,
As loth to lose occasion for discourse ; 70
Some, 'tis observed, who feel a wish to speak,
Will a due place for introduction seek ;
On to their purpose step by step they steal,
And all their way, by certain signals, feel ;
Others plunge in at once, and never heed
Whose turn they take, whose purpose they impede ;
Resolved to shine, they hasten to begin,
Of ending thoughtless—and of these was Gwyn.
And thus he spake :

———"It grieves me to the soul
"To see how man submits to man's control ; 80
"How overpower'd and shackled minds are led
"In vulgar tracks, and to submission bred ;
"The coward never on himself relies,
"But to an equal for assistance flies ;
"Man yields to custom as he bows to fate,
"In all things ruled—mind, body, and estate ;
"In pain, in sickness, we for cure apply
"To them we know not, and we know not why ;
"But that the creature has some jargon read,
"And got some Scotchman's system in his head ; 90
"Some grave impostor, who will health insure,
"Long as your patience or your wealth endure ;
"But mark them well, the pale and sickly crew,
"They have not health, and can they give it you ?
"These solemn cheats their various methods choose ;
"A system fires them, as a bard his muse :
"Hence wordy wars arise ; the learn'd divide,
"And groaning patients curse each erring guide.
"Next, our affairs are govern'd, buy or sell,
"Upon the deed the law must fix its spell ; 100
"Whether we hire or let, we must have still
"The dubious aid of an attorney's skill ;
"They take a part in every man's affairs,
"And in all business some concern is theirs ;

THE GENTLEMAN FARMER

"Because mankind in ways prescribed are found,
"Like flocks that follow on a beaten ground,
"Each abject nature in the way proceeds,
"That now to shearing, now to slaughter leads.
"Should you offend, though meaning no offence,
"You have no safety in your innocence; 110
"The statute broken then is placed in view,
"And men must pay for crimes they never knew.
"Who would by law regain his plunder'd store,
"Would pick up fallen merc'ry from the floor;
"If he pursue it, here and there it slides;
"He would collect it, but it more divides;
"This part and this he stops, but still in vain,
"It slips aside, and breaks in parts again;
"Till, after time and pains, and care and cost,
"He finds his labour and his object lost. 120
"But most it grieves me, (friends alone are round,)
"To see a man in priestly fetters bound;
"Guides to the soul, these friends of Heaven contrive,
"Long as man lives, to keep his fears alive;
"Soon as an infant breathes, their rites begin;
"Who knows not sinning, must be freed from sin;
"Who needs no bond must yet engage in vows;
"Who has no judgment, must a creed espouse:
"Advanced in life, our boys are bound by rules, 130
"Are catechised in churches, cloisters, schools,
"And train'd in thralldom to be fit for tools;
"The youth grown up, he now a partner needs,
"And lo! a priest, as soon as he succeeds.
"What man of sense can marriage-rites approve?
"What man of spirit can be bound to love?
"Forced to be kind! compell'd to be sincere!
"Do chains and fetters make companions dear?
"Pris'ners indeed we bind; but though the bond
"May keep them safe, it does not make them fond:
"The ring, the vow, the witness, licence, prayers, 140
"All parties known! made public all affairs!
"Such forms men suffer, and from these they date
"A deed of love begun with all they hate.
"Absurd, that none the beaten road should shun,

GEORGE CRABBE

"But love to do what other dupes have done !

"Well, now your priest has made you one of twain,

"Look you for rest? Alas! you look in vain.

"If sick, he comes; you cannot die in peace,

"Till he attends to witness your release;

"To vex your soul, and urge you to confess 150

"The sins you feel, remember, or can guess;

"Nay, when departed, to your grave he goes,

"But there indeed he hurts not your repose.

"Such are our burthens; part we must sustain,

"But need not link new grievance to the chain.

"Yet men like idiots will their frames surround

"With these vile shackles, nor confess they're bound;

"In all that most confines them they confide,

"Their slavery boast, and make their bonds their pride;

"E'en as the pressure galls them, they declare, 160

"(Good souls!) how happy and how free they are!

"As madmen, pointing round their wretched cells,

"Cry, 'Lo! the palace where our honour dwells.'

"Such is our state: but I resolve to live

"By rules my reason and my feelings give;

"No legal guards shall keep enthral'd my mind,

"No slaves command me, and no teachers blind.

"Tempted by sins, let me their strength defy,

"But have no second in a surplice by;

"No bottle-holder, with officious aid, 170

"To comfort conscience, weaken'd and afraid:

"Then if I yield, my frailty is not known;

"And, if I stand, the glory is my own.

"When Truth and Reason are our friends, we seem

"Alive! awake!—the superstitious dream.

"Oh! then, fair Truth, for thee alone I seek,

"Friend to the wise, supporter of the weak;

"From thee we learn whate'er is right and just;

"Forms to despise, professions to distrust;

"Creeds to reject, pretensions to deride, 180

"And, following thee, to follow none beside."

Such was the speech; it struck upon the ear

Like sudden thunder, none expect to hear.

He saw men's wonder with a manly pride,

THE GENTLEMAN FARMER

And gravely smiled at guest electrified ;
"A farmer this !" they said, "Oh ! let him seek
"That place where he may for his country speak ;
"On some great question to harangue for hours,
"While speakers hearing, envy nobler powers !"

Wisdom like this, as all things rich and rare, 190
Must be acquired with pains, and kept with care ;
In books he sought it, which his friends might view,
When their kind host the guarding curtain drew.
There were historic works for graver hours,
And lighter verse, to spur the languid powers ;
There metaphysics, logic there had place ;
But of devotion not a single trace—

Save what is taught in Gibbon's florid page,
And other guides of this inquiring age ;
There Hume appear'd, and, near, a splendid book 200
Composed by Gay's good Lord of Bolingbroke :
With these were mix'd the light, the free, the vain,
And from a corner peep'd the sage Tom Paine :
Here four neat volumes 'Chesterfield' were named,
For manners much and easy morals famed ;
With chaste Memoirs of Females, to be read
When deeper studies had confused the head.

Such his resources, treasures where he sought
For daily knowledge till his mind was fraught :
Then, when his friends were present, for their use 210
He would the riches he had stored produce ;
He found his lamp burn clearer, when each day
He drew for all he purposed to display.
For these occasions, forth his knowledge sprung,
As mustard quickens on a bed of dung ;
All was prepared, and guests allow'd the praise,
For what they saw he could so quickly raise.

Such this new friend ; and, when the year came round,
The same impressive, reasoning sage was found :
Then, too, was seen the pleasant mansion graced 220
With a fair damsel—his no vulgar taste :
The neat Rebecca—sly, observant, still ;
Watching his eye, and waiting on his will ;
Simple yet smart her dress, her manners meek,

GEORGE CRABBE

Her smiles spoke for her, she would seldom speak ;
But watch'd each look, each meaning to detect,
And (pleas'd with notice) felt for all neglect.

With her lived Gwyn a sweet harmonious life,
Who, forms excepted, was a charming wife.
The wives indeed, so made by vulgar law, 230
Affected scorn, and censured what they saw ;
And what they saw not, fancied ; said 'twas sin,
And took no notice of the wife of Gwyn.
But he despised their rudeness, and would prove
Theirs was compulsion and distrust, not love ;
"Fools as they were ! could they conceive that rings
"And parsons' blessings were substantial things ?"
They answer'd "Yes ;" while he contemptuous spoke
Of the low notions held by simple folk ;
Yet, strange that anger in a man so wise 240
Should from the notions of these fools arise ;
Can they so vex us, whom we so despise ? []

Brave as he was, our hero felt a dread
Lest those who saw him kind should think him led ;
If to his bosom fear a visit paid,
It was, lest he should be supposed afraid.
Hence sprang his orders ; not that he desired
The things when done : obedience he required ;
And thus, to prove his absolute command,
Ruled every heart, and moved each subject hand ; 250
Assent he ask'd for every word and whim,
To prove that *he alone was king of him*.

The still Rebecca, who her station knew,
With ease resign'd the honours not her due ;
Well pleased, she saw that men her board would grace,
And wish'd not there to see a female face ;
When by her lover she his spouse was styled,
Polite she thought it, and demurely smiled ;
But when he wanted wives and maidens round
So to regard her, she grew grave, and frown'd ; 260
And sometimes whisper'd—"Why should you respect
"These people's notions, yet their forms reject ?"

Gwyn, though from marriage bond and fetter free,
Still felt abridgment in his liberty ;

THE GENTLEMAN FARMER

Something of hesitation he betray'd,
And in her presence thought of what he said.
Thus fair Rebecca, though she walk'd astray,
His creed rejecting, judged it right to pray ;
To be at church, to sit with serious looks,
To read her Bible and her Sunday-books. 270
She hated all those new and daring themes,
And call'd his free conjectures "devil's dreams ;"
She honour'd still the priesthood in her fall,
And claim'd respect and reverence for them all ;
Call'd them "of sin's destructive power the foes,
"And not such blockheads as he might suppose."
Gwyn to his friends would smile, and sometimes say,
"Tis a kind fool, why vex her in her way ?"
Her way she took, and still had more in view,
For she contrived that he should take it too. 280
The daring freedom of his soul, 'twas plain,
In part was lost in a divided reign :
A king and queen, who yet in prudence sway'd
Their peaceful state, and were in turn obey'd.

Yet such our fate that, when we plan the best,
Something arises to disturb our rest :
For, though in spirits high, in body strong,
Gwyn something felt—he knew not what—was wrong ;
He wish'd to know, for he believed the thing,
If unremoved, would other evil bring : 290
"She must perceive, of late he could not eat,
"And when he walk'd, he trembled on his feet ;
"He had forebodings, and he seem'd as one
"Stopp'd on the road, or threaten'd by a dun ;
"He could not live, and yet, should he apply
"To those physicians—he must sooner die."

The mild Rebecca heard with some disdain,
And some distress, her friend and lord complain :
His death she fear'd not, but had painful doubt
What his distemper'd nerves might bring about ; 300
With power like hers she dreaded an ally,
And yet there was a person in her eye ;—
She thought, debated, fix'd—"Alas !" she said,
"A case like yours must be no more delay'd."

GEORGE CRABBE

"You hate these doctors; well! but were a friend
"And doctor one, your fears would have an end.
"My cousin Mollet—Scotland holds him now—
"Is above all men skilful, all allow:
"Of late a doctor, and within a while
"He means to settle in this favour'd isle;
"Should he attend you, with his skill profound,
"You must be safe, and shortly would be sound."

310

When men in health against physicians rail,
They should consider that their nerves may fail;
Who calls a lawyer rogue, may find, too late,
On one of these depends his whole estate;
Nay, when the world can nothing more produce,
The priest, th' insulted priest, may have his use.
Ease, health, and comfort, lift a man so high,
These powers are dwarfs that he can scarcely spy;
Pain, sickness, languor, keep a man so low,
That these neglected dwarfs to giants grow.
Happy is he who through the medium sees
Of clear good sense—but Gwyn was not of these.

320

He heard and he rejoiced: "Ah! let him come,
"And, till he fixes, make my house his home."
Home came the doctor—he was much admired;
He told the patient what his case required;
His hours for sleep, his time to eat and drink;
When he should ride, read, rest, compose, or think.
Thus join'd peculiar skill and art profound,
To make the fancy-sick no more than fancy-sound.

330

With such attention, who could long be ill?
Returning health proclaim'd the doctor's skill.

Presents and praises from a grateful heart
Were freely offer'd on the patient's part;
In high repute the doctor seem'd to stand,
But still had got no footing in the land;
And, as he saw the seat was rich and fair,
He felt disposed to fix his station there.

340

To gain his purpose, he perform'd the part
Of a good actor, and prepared to start—
Not like a traveller in a day serene,
When the sun shone and when the roads were clean;

THE GENTLEMAN FARMER

Not like the pilgrim, when the morning gray,
The ruddy eve succeeding, sends his way ;
But in a season when the sharp east wind
Had all its influence on a nervous mind.
When past the parlour's front it fiercely blew,
And Gwyn sat pitying every bird that flew,
This strange physician said—"Adieu ! adieu !
"Farewell !—Heaven bless you !—if you should—but no,
"You need not fear—farewell ! 'tis time to go."

The doctor spoke ; and as the patient heard,
His old disorders (dreadful train !) appear'd ;
"He felt the tingling tremor, and the stress
"Upon his nerves that he could not express ;
"Should his good friend forsake him, he perhaps
"Might meet his death, and surely a relapse."

So, as the doctor seem'd intent to part,
He cried in terror—"Oh ! be where thou art :
"Come, thou art young, and unengaged ; oh ! come,
"Make me thy friend, give comfort to mine home ;
"I have now symptoms that require thine aid,
"Do, doctor, stay"—th' obliging doctor stay'd.

Thus Gwyn was happy ; he had now a friend,
And a meek spouse on whom he could depend.
But now, possess'd of male and female guide,
Divided power he thus must subdivide :

In earlier days he rode, or sat at ease
Reclined, and having but himself to please ;
Now, if he would a fav'rite nag bestride,
He sought permission—"Doctor, may I ride ?"—
(Rebecca's eye her sovereign pleasure told,)—
"I think you may ; but, guarded from the cold,
"Ride forty minutes."—Free and happy soul !
He scorn'd submission, and a man's control ;
But where such friends in every care unite
All for his good, obedience is delight.

Now Gwyn, a sultan, bade affairs adieu,
Led and assisted by the faithful two ;
The favourite fair, Rebecca, near him sat,
And whisper'd whom to love, assist, or hate ;
While the chief vizier eased his lord of cares,

GEORGE CRABBE

And bore himself the burden of affairs.
No dangers could from such alliance flow,
But from that law that changes all below.

When wint'ry winds with leaves bestrew'd the ground,
And men were coughing all the village round ;
When public papers of invasion told,
Diseases, famines, perils new and old ;
When philosophic writers fail'd to clear
The mind of gloom, and lighter works to cheer ;
Then came fresh terrors on our hero's mind—
Fears unforeseen, and feelings undefined.

390

"In outward ills," he cried, "I rest assured
Of my friend's aid ; they will in time be cured :

"But can his art subdue, resist, control
These inward griefs and troubles of the soul ?

"Oh ! my Rebecca ! my disorder'd mind

400

"No help in study, none in thought can find ;

"What must I do, Rebecca ?" She proposed

The parish-guide ; but what could be disclosed
To a proud priest ?—"No ! him have I defied,

"Insulted, slighted—shall he be my guide ?

"But one there is, and if report be just,

"A wise good man, whom I may safely trust ;

"Who goes from house to house, from ear to ear,

"To make his truths, his Gospel truths, appear ;

"True if indeed they be, 'tis time that I should hear.

410[]

"Send for that man ; and if report be just,

"I, like Cornelius, will the teacher trust ;

"But, if deceiver, I the vile deceit

"Shall soon discover, and discharge the cheat."

To Doctor Mollet was the grief confess'd,
While Gwyn the freedom of his mind express'd ;
Yet own'd it was to ills and errors prone,
And he for guilt and frailty must atone.

"My books, perhaps," the wav'ring mortal cried,

"Like men deceive—I would be satisfied ;

420

"And to my soul the pious man may bring

"Comfort and light—do let me try the thing."

The cousins met ; what pass'd with Gwyn was told ;

"Alas !" the doctor said ; "how hard to hold

THE GENTLEMAN FARMER

"These easy minds, where all impressions made
"At first sink deeply, and then quickly fade;
"For while so strong these new-born fancies reign,
"We must divert them, to oppose is vain.
"You see him valiant now, he scorns to heed
"The bigot's threat'nings or the zealot's creed; 430
"Shook by a dream, he next for truth receives
"What frenzy teaches, and what fear believes;
"And this will place him in the power of one
"Whom we must seek, because we cannot shun."

Wisp had been ostler at a busy inn,
Where he beheld and grew in dread of sin;
Then to a Baptists' meeting found his way,
Became a convert, and was taught to pray;
Then preach'd; and, being earnest and sincere,
Brought other sinners to religious fear. 440

Together grew his influence and his fame,
Till our dejected hero heard his name;
His little failings were a grain of pride,
Raised by the numbers he presumed to guide:
A love of presents, and of lofty praise
For his meek spirit and his humble ways;
But though this spirit would on flattery feed,
No praise could blind him and no arts mislead.
To him the doctor made the wishes known
Of his good patron, but conceal'd his own; 450
He of all teachers had distrust and doubt,
And was reserved in what he came about;
Though on a plain and simple message sent,
He had a secret and a bold intent.

Their minds at first were deeply veil'd; disguise
Form'd the slow speech, and op'd the eager eyes;
Till by degrees sufficient light was thrown
On every view, and all the business shown.
Wisp, as a skilful guide who led the blind,
Had powers to rule and awe the vapourish mind, 460 }
But not the changeful will, the wavering fear to bind; []
And, should his conscience give him leave to dwell
With Gwyn, and every rival power expel,
(A dubious point,) yet he, with every care,

GEORGE CRABBE

Might soon the lot of the rejected share,
 And other Wisps be found like him to reign,
 And then be thrown upon the world again.
 He thought it prudent, then, and felt it just,
 The present guides of his new friend to trust;
 True, he conceived, to touch the harder heart 470
 Of the cool doctor, was beyond his art;
 But mild Rebecca he could surely sway,
 While Gwyn would follow where she led the way:
 So, to do good, (and why a duty shun,
 Because rewarded for the good when done?)
 He with his friends would join in all they plann'd,
 Save when his faith or feelings should withstand;
 There he must rest, sole judge of his affairs,
 While they might rule exclusively in theirs.

When Gwyn his message to the teacher sent, 480
 He fear'd his friends would show their discontent;
 And prudent seem'd it to th' attendant pair,
 Not all at once to show an aspect fair.
 On Wisp they seem'd to look with jealous eye,
 And fair Rebecca was demure and shy;
 But by degrees the teacher's worth they knew,
 And were so kind, they seem'd converted too.

Wisp took occasion to the nymph to say,
 "You must be married: will you name the day?"
 She smiled,—"'Tis well; but, should he not comply, 490
 "Is it quite safe th' experiment to try?"—
 "My child," the teacher said, "who feels remorse,
 "(And feels not he?) must wish relief of course;
 "And can he find it, while he fears the crime?—
 "You must be married; will you name the time?"

Glad was the patron as a man could be,
 Yet marvell'd too, to find his guides agree;
 "But what the cause?" he cried; "'tis genuine love for
 me." []

Each found his part, and let one act describe
 The powers and honours of th' accordant tribe:— 500
 A man for favour to the mansion speeds,
 And cons his threefold task as he proceeds;
 To teacher Wisp he bows with humble air,

THE GENTLEMAN FARMER

And begs his interest for a barn's repair ;
Then for the doctor he inquires, who loves
To hear applause for what his skill improves,
And gives, for praise, assent,—and to the fair
He brings of pullets a delicious pair ;
Thus sees a peasant, with discernment nice,
A love of power, conceit, and avarice.

510

Lo ! now the change complete : the convert Gwyn
Has sold his books, and has renounced his sin ;
Mollet his body orders, Wisp his soul,
And o'er his purse the lady takes control ;
No friends beside he needs, and none attend—
Soul, body, and estate, has each a friend ;
And fair Rebecca leads a virtuous life—
She rules a mistress, and she reigns a wife.

TALE IV.

PROCRASTINATION.

Heaven witness
I have been to you [a true and humble wife.]
Henry VIII. A& II. Scene 4.

Gentle lady,
When first I did impart my love to you,
I freely told you all the wealth I had.
Merchant of Venice, A& III. Scene 2.

[The leisure and the fearful time]
Cuts off [the ceremonious] vows of love,
And ample interchange of sweet discourse,
Which so long sunder'd friends should dwell upon.
Richard III. A& V. Scene 3.

I know thee not, old man; fall to thy prayers.
2 Henry IV. A& V. Scene 5.

Farewell,
Thou pure impiety [and] impious purity;
For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love.
Much Ado about Nothing, A& IV. Scene [1].

TALE IV.

PROCRASTINATION.

LOVE will expire; the gay, the happy dream
Will turn to scorn, indiff'rence, or esteem.
Some favour'd pairs, in this exchange, are bless'd,
Nor sigh for raptures in a state of rest;
Others, ill match'd, with minds unpair'd, repent
At once the deed, and know no more content;
From joy to anguish they, in haste, decline,
And with their fondness, their esteem resign.
More luckless still their fate, who are the prey
Of long-protracted hope and dull delay;
'Mid plans of bliss the heavy hours pass on,
Till love is wither'd, and till joy is gone.

10

This gentle flame two youthful hearts possess'd,
The sweet disturber of unenvied rest:
The prudent Dinah was the maid beloved,
And the kind Rupert was the swain approved.
A wealthy aunt her gentle niece sustain'd,
He, with a father, at his desk remain'd;
The youthful couple, to their vows sincere,
Thus loved expectant; year succeeding year,
With pleasant views and hopes, but not a prospect near.
Rupert some comfort in his station saw,
But the poor virgin lived in dread and awe;

20 }
[]

GEORGE CRABBE

Upon her anxious looks the widow smiled,
And bade her wait, "for she was yet a child."
She for her neighbour had a due respect,
Nor would his son encourage or reject;
And thus the pair, with expectations vain,
Beheld the seasons change and change again.
Meantime the nymph her tender tales perused, 30
Where cruel aunts impatient girls refused;
While hers, though teasing, boasted to be kind,
And she, resenting, to be all resign'd.

The dame was sick, and, when the youth applied
For her consent, she groan'd, and cough'd, and cried;
Talk'd of departing, and again her breath
Drew hard, and cough'd, and talk'd again of death:
"Here you may live, my Dinah! here the boy
"And you together my estate enjoy."
Thus to the lovers was her mind express'd, 40
Till they forbore to urge the fond request.

Servant, and nurse, and comforter, and friend,
Dinah had still some duty to attend;
But yet their walk, when Rupert's evening call
Obtain'd an hour, made sweet amends for all;
So long they now each other's thoughts had known,
That nothing seem'd exclusively their own;
But with the common wish, the mutual fear,
They now had travell'd to their thirtieth year.

At length a prospect open'd—but, alas! 50
Long time must yet before the union pass;
Rupert was call'd in other clime, t' increase
Another's wealth, and toil for future peace;
Loth were the lovers; but the aunt declared
'Twas fortune's call, and they must be prepared:
"You now are young, and for this brief delay,
"And Dinah's care, what I bequeath will pay;
"All will be yours; nay, love, suppress that sigh;
"The kind must suffer, and the best must die."
Then came the cough, and strong the signs it gave 60
Of holding long contention with the grave.

The lovers parted with a gloomy view,
And little comfort but that both were true;

PROCRASTINATION

He for uncertain duties doom'd to steer,
While hers remain'd too certain and severe.

Letters arrived, and Rupert fairly told
"His cares were many, and his hopes were cold ;
"The view more clouded, that was never fair,
"And love alone preserved him from despair."
In other letters brighter hopes he drew,
"His friends were kind, and he believed them true."

70

When the sage widow Dinah's grief descried,
She wonder'd much why one so happy sigh'd ;
Then bade her see how her poor aunt sustain'd
The ills of life, nor murmur'd nor complain'd.
To vary pleasures, from the lady's chest
Were drawn the pearly string and tabby vest ;
Beads, jewels, laces, all their value shown,
With the kind notice—"They will be your own."

This hope, these comforts cherish'd day by day,
To Dinah's bosom made a gradual way ;
Till love of treasure had as large a part
As love of Rupert in the virgin's heart.
Whether it be that tender passions fail
From their own nature, while the strong prevail ;
Or whether av'rice, like the poison-tree¹,
Kills all beside it, and alone will be :
Whatever cause prevail'd, the pleasure grew
In Dinah's soul—she loved the hoards to view ;
With lively joy those comforts she survey'd,
And love grew languid in the careful maid.

80

90

Now the grave niece partook the widow's cares ;
Look'd to the great and ruled the small affairs ;
Saw clean'd the plate, arranged the china show,
And felt her passion for a shilling grow.
Th' indulgent aunt increased the maid's delight,
By placing tokens of her wealth in sight ;
She loved the value of her bonds to tell,
And spake of stocks, and how they rose and fell.

¹ Allusion is here made, not to the well-known species of *sumach*, called the poison-oak, or *toxicodendron*, but to the *upas*, or poison-tree of Java ; whether it be real or imaginary, this is no proper place for inquiry.

GEORGE CRABBE

This passion grew, and gain'd at length such sway, 100
 That other passions shrank to make it way ;
 Romantic notions now the heart forsook,
 She read but seldom, and she changed her book ;
 And for the verses she was wont to send,
 Short was her prose, and she was Rupert's friend.
 Seldom she wrote, and then the widow's cough,
 And constant call, excused her breaking off ;
 Who now, oppress'd, no longer took the air,
 But sate and dozed upon an easy chair.
 The cautious doctor saw the case was clear, 110
 But judg'd it best to have companions near ;
 They came, they reason'd, they prescribed—at last,
 Like honest men, they said their hopes were past ;
 Then came a priest—'tis comfort to reflect,
 When all is over, there was no neglect ;
 And all was over—by her husband's bones,
 The widow rests beneath the sculptured stones,
 That yet record their fondness and their fame,
 While all they left the virgin's care became :
 Stock, bonds, and buildings ;—it disturb'd her rest, 120
 To think what load of troubles she possess'd.
 Yet, if a trouble, she resolv'd to take
 Th' important duty, for the donor's sake ;
 She too was heiress to the widow's taste,
 Her love of hoarding, and her dread of waste.

Sometimes the past would on her mind intrude,
 And then a conflict full of care ensued ;
 The thoughts of Rupert on her mind would press,
 His worth she knew, but doubted his success ;
 Of old she saw him heedless ; what the boy 130
 Forbore to save, the man would not enjoy ;
 Oft had he lost the chance that care would seize,
 Willing to live, but more to live at ease ;
 Yet could she not a broken vow defend,
 And Heav'n, perhaps, might yet enrich her friend.

Month after month was pass'd, and all were spent
 In quiet comfort and in rich content :
 Miseries there were, and woes the world around,
 But these had not her pleasant dwelling found ;

PROCRASTINATION

She knew that mothers grieved, and widows wept, 140
And she was sorry, said her prayers, and slept.
Thus pass'd the seasons, and to Dinah's board
Gave what the seasons to the rich afford ;
For she indulged, nor was her heart so small,
That one strong passion should engross it all.

A love of splendour now with av'rice strove,
And oft appear'd to be the stronger love ;
A secret pleasure fill'd the widow's breast,
When she reflected on the hoards possess'd ;
But livelier joy inspired th' ambitious maid, 150
When she the purchase of those hoards display'd.
In small but splendid room she loved to see
That all was placed in view and harmony ;
There, as with eager glance she look'd around,
She much delight in every object found ;
While books devout were near her—to destroy,
Should it arise, an overflow of joy.

Within that fair apartment, guests might see
The comforts cull'd for wealth by vanity.
Around the room an Indian paper blazed, 160
With lively tint and figures boldly raised ;
Silky and soft upon the floor below,
Th' elastic carpet rose with crimson glow ;
All things around implied both cost and care ;
What met the eye was elegant or rare.
Some curious trifles round the room were laid,
By hope presented to the wealthy maid :
Within a costly case of varnish'd wood,
In level rows, her polish'd volumes stood ;
Shown as a favour to a chosen few, 170
To prove what beauty for a book could do ;
A silver urn with curious work was fraught ;
A silver lamp from Grecian pattern wrought ;
Above her head, all gorgeous to behold,
A time-piece stood on feet of burnish'd gold ;
A stag's-head crest adorn'd the pictured case,
Through the pure crystal shone th' enamell'd face ;
And, while on brilliants moved the hands of steel,
It click'd from pray'r to pray'r, from meal to meal.

Here as the lady sate, a friendly pair
 Stept in t' admire the view, and took their chair.
 They then related how the young and gay
 Were thoughtless wandering in the broad highway;
 How tender damsels sail'd in tilted boats,
 And laugh'd with wicked men in scarlet coats;
 And how we live in such degen'rate times
 That men conceal their wants, and show their crimes;
 While vicious deeds are screen'd by fashion's name,
 And what was once our pride is now our shame.

180

Dinah was musing, as her friends discoursed,
 When these last words a sudden entrance forced
 Upon her mind, and what was once her pride
 And now her shame, some painful views supplied;
 Thoughts of the past within her bosom press'd,
 And there a change was felt, and was confess'd.
 While thus the virgin strove with secret pain,
 Her mind was wandering o'er the troubled main;
 Still she was silent, nothing seem'd to see,
 But sate and sigh'd in pensive reverie.

190

The friends prepared new subjects to begin,
 When tall Susannah, maiden starch, stalk'd in;
 Not in her ancient mode, sedate and slow,
 As when she came, the mind she knew to know;
 Nor as, when list'ning half an hour before,
 She twice or thrice tapp'd gently at the door;
 But, all decorum cast in wrath aside,
 "I think the devil's in the man!" she cried;
 "A huge tall sailor, with his tawny cheek,
 "And pitted face, will with my lady speak;
 "He grinn'd an ugly smile, and said he knew,
 "Please you, my lady, 'twould be joy to you;
 "What must I answer?"—Trembling and distress'd
 Sank the pale Dinah, by her fears oppress'd;
 When thus alarm'd, and brooking no delay,
 Swift to her room the stranger made his way.

200

"Revive, my love!" said he, "I've done thee harm,
 "Give me thy pardon," and he look'd alarm;
 Meantime the prudent Dinah had contrived
 Her soul to question, and she then revived.

210

PROCRASTINATION

"See! my good friend," and then she raised her head, 220 }
 "The bloom of life, the strength of youth is fled; []
 "Living we die; to us the world is dead.
 "We parted bless'd with health, and I am now
 "Age-struck and feeble, so I find art thou;
 "Thine eye is sunken, furrow'd is thy face,
 "And downward look'st thou—so we run our race;
 "And happier they, whose race is nearly run,
 "Their troubles over, and their duties done."—
 "True, lady, true, we are not girl and boy;
 "But time has left us something to enjoy."— 230
 "What! thou hast learn'd my fortune?—yes, I live
 "To feel how poor the comforts wealth can give;
 "Thou too perhaps art wealthy; but our fate
 "Still mocks our wishes, wealth is come too late."—
 "To me nor late nor early; I am come
 "Poor as I left thee to my native home:
 "Nor yet," said Rupert, "will I grieve; 'tis mine
 "To share thy comforts, and the glory thine;
 "For thou wilt gladly take that generous part
 "That both exalts and gratifies the heart; 240
 "While mine rejoices."—"Heavens!" return'd the maid,
 "This talk to one so wither'd and decay'd?
 "No! all my care is now to fit my mind
 "For other spousal, and to die resign'd.
 "As friend and neighbour, I shall hope to see
 "These noble views, this pious love in thee;
 "That we together may the change await,
 "Guides and spectators in each other's fate;
 "When fellow-pilgrims, we shall daily crave
 "The mutual prayer that arms us for the grave." 250
 Half angry, half in doubt, the lover gazed
 On the meek maiden, by her speech amazed.
 "Dinah," said he, "dost thou respect thy vows?
 "What spousal mean'st thou?—thou art Rupert's spouse;
 "The chance is mine to take, and thine to give;
 "But trifling this, if we together live.
 "Can I believe, that, after all the past,
 "Our vows, our loves, thou wilt be false at last?
 "Something thou hast—I know not what—in view;

GEORGE CRABBE

"I find thee pious—let me find thee true."— 260
 "Ah! cruel this; but do, my friend, depart;
 "And to its feelings leave my wounded heart."—
 "Nay, speak at once; and, Dinah, let me know,
 "Mean'st thou to take me, now I'm wreck'd, in tow?
 "Be fair; nor longer keep me in the dark;
 "Am I forsaken for a trimmer spark?
 "Heav'n's spouse thou art not; nor can I believe
 "That God accepts her who will man deceive.
 "True, I am shatter'd; I have service seen,
 "And service done, and have in trouble been; 270
 "My cheek (it shames me not) has lost its red,
 "And the brown buff is o'er my features spread;
 "Perchance my speech is rude; for I among
 "Th' untamed have been, in temper and in tongue;
 "Have been trepann'd, have lived in toil and care,
 "And wrought for wealth I was not doom'd to share;
 "It touch'd me deeply, for I felt a pride
 "In gaining riches for my destined bride.
 "Speak, then, my fate; for these my sorrows past,
 "Time lost, youth fled, hope wearied, and at last 280
 "This doubt of thee—a childish thing to tell,
 "But certain truth—my very throat they swell;
 "They stop the breath, and but for shame could I
 "Give way to weakness, and with passion cry;
 "These are unmanly struggles, but I feel
 "This hour must end them, and perhaps will heal."—
 Here Dinah sigh'd as if afraid to speak—
 And then repeated—"They were frail and weak;
 "His soul she loved, and hoped he had the grace
 "To fix his thoughts upon a better place." 290
 She ceased;—with steady glance, as if to see
 The very root of this hypocrisy,
 He her small fingers moulded in his hard
 And bronzed broad hand; then told her, his regard,
 His best respect were gone, but love had still
 Hold in his heart, and govern'd yet the will—
 Or he would curse her;—saying this, he threw
 The hand in scorn away, and bade adieu
 To every lingering hope, with every care in view. }]

PROCRASTINATION

Proud and indignant, suffering, sick, and poor,
He grieved unseen, and spoke of love no more—
Till all he felt in indignation died,
As hers had sunk in avarice and pride. 300

In health declining, as in mind distress'd,
To some in power his troubles he confess'd,
And shares a parish-gift;—at prayers he sees
The pious Dinah dropp'd upon her knees;
Thence as she walks the street with stately air,
As chance directs, oft meet the parted pair.
When he, with thickset coat of badge-man's blue, 310
Moves near her shaded silk of changeful hue;
When his thin locks of grey approach her braid,
A costly purchase made in beauty's aid;
When his frank air, and his unstudied pace,
Are seen with her soft manner, air, and grace.
And his plain artless look with her sharp meaning face : []
It might some wonder in a stranger move,
How these together could have talk'd of love.

Behold them now!—see, there a tradesman stands,
And humbly hearkens to some fresh commands; 320
He moves to speak, she interrupts him—"Stay,"
Her air expresses—"Hark to what I say!"
Ten paces off, poor Rupert on a seat
Has taken refuge from the noon-day heat,
His eyes on her intent, as if to find
What were the movements of that subtle mind;
How still! how earnest is he!—it appears
His thoughts are wand'ring through his earlier years;
Through years of fruitless labour, to the day
When all his earthly prospects died away. 330
"Had I," he thinks, "been wealthier of the two,
"Would she have found me so unkind, untrue?"
"Or knows not man, when poor, what man when rich will
do?" []

"Yes, yes! I feel that I had faithful proved,
"And should have soothed and raised her, bless'd and loved."

But Dinah moves—she had observed before
The pensive Rupert at an humble door.
Some thoughts of pity raised by his distress,

GEORGE CRABBE

Some feeling touch of ancient tenderness ;
Religion, duty, urged the maid to speak
In terms of kindness to a man so weak ;
But pride forbad, and to return would prove
She felt the shame of his neglected love ;
Nor wrapp'd in silence could she pass, afraid
Each eye should see her, and each heart upbraid.
One way remain'd—the way the Levite took,
Who without mercy could on misery look,
(A way perceived by craft, approved by pride) :
She cross'd, and pass'd him on the other side.

340

TALE V.

THE PATRON.

It were all one,
That I should love a bright [particular] star,
And think to wed it; [he] is so much above me:
In [his] bright radiance and collateral heat
Must I be comforted, not in [his] sphere.
All's Well that Ends Well, Act I. Scene 1.

Poor wretches, that depend
On greatness' favours, dream as I have done,—
Wake, and find nothing.
Cymbeline, Act V. Scene 4.

And since
Th' affliction of my mind amends, with which
I fear a madness held me.
[*The*] *Tempest*, Act V.

TALE V.

THE PATRON.

A BOROUGH-BAILIFF, who to law was train'd,
A wife and sons in decent state maintain'd ;
He had his way in life's rough ocean steer'd,
And many a rock and coast of danger clear'd ;
He saw where others fail'd, and care had he
Others in him should not such failings see ;
His sons in various busy states were placed,
And all began the sweets of gain to taste,
Save John, the younger ; who, of sprightly parts,
Felt not a love for money-making arts. 10
In childhood feeble, he, for country air,
Had long resided with a rustic pair ;
All round whose room were doleful ballads, songs,
Of lovers' sufferings and of ladies' wrongs ;
Of peevish ghosts who came at dark midnight,
For breach of promise guilty men to fright ;
Love, marriage, murder, were the themes, with these,
All that on idle, ardent spirits seize ;
Robbers at land and pirates on the main,
Enchanters foil'd, spells broken, giants slain ;
Legends of love, with tales of halls and bowers, 20
Choice of rare songs, and garlands of choice flowers,
And all the hungry mind without a choice devours. }

From village-children kept apart by pride,
With such enjoyments, and without a guide,
Inspired by feelings all such works infused,
John snatch'd a pen, and wrote as he perused :
68

THE PATRON

With the like fancy he could make his knight
Slay half an host and put the rest to flight ;
With the like knowledge, he could make him ride
From isle to isle at Parthenissa's side ;
And with a heart yet free, no busy brain
Form'd wilder notions of delight and pain,
The raptures smiles create, the anguish of disdain.

30

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[]

Such were the fruits of John's poetic toil—

Weeds, but still proofs of vigour in the soil.

He nothing purposed but with vast delight,

Let Fancy loose, and wonder'd at her flight ;

His notions of poetic worth were high,

And of his own still-hoarded poetry.—

40

These to his father's house he bore with pride,

A miser's treasure, in his room to hide ;

Till, spurr'd by glory, to a reading friend

He kindly show'd the sonnets he had penn'd.

With erring judgment, though with heart sincere,

That friend exclaim'd, "These beauties must appear."

In Magazines they claim'd their share of fame,

Though undistinguish'd by their author's name ;

And with delight the young enthusiast found

The muse of 'Marcus' with applauses crown'd.

50

This heard the father, and with some alarm ;

"The boy," said he, "will neither trade nor farm ;

"He for both law and physic is unfit ;

"Wit he may have, but cannot live on wit :

"Let him his talents then to learning give,

"Where verse is honour'd, and where poets live."

John kept his terms at college unreprieved,

Took his degree, and left the life he loved ;

Not yet ordain'd, his leisure he employ'd

In the light labours he so much enjoy'd ;

60

His favourite notions and his daring views

Were cherish'd still, and he adored the Muse.

"A little time, and he should burst to light,

"And admiration of the world excite ;

"And every friend, now cool and apt to blame

"His fond pursuit, would wonder at his fame."

When led by fancy, and from view retired,

69

GEORGE CRABBE

He call'd before him all his heart desired ;
 "Fame shall be mine, then wealth shall I possess,
 "And beauty next an ardent lover bless ; 70
 "For me the maid shall leave her nobler state,
 "Happy to raise and share her poet's fate."
 He saw each day his father's frugal board
 With simple fare by cautious prudence stored ;
 Where each indulgence was foreweigh'd with care,
 And the grand maxims were to save and spare.
 Yet in his walks, his closet, and his bed,
 All frugal cares and prudent counsels fled ;
 And bounteous Fancy for his glowing mind
 Wrought various scenes, and all of glorious kind ; 80
 Slaves of the *ring* and *lamp*! what need of you,
 When Fancy's self such magic deeds can do?

Though rapt in visions of no vulgar kind,
 To common subjects stoop'd our poet's mind ;
 And oft, when wearied with more ardent flight,
 He felt a spur satiric song to write ;
 A rival burgess his bold muse attack'd,
 And whipp'd severely for a well-known fact ;
 For, while he seem'd to all demure and shy,
 Our poet gazed at what was passing by ; 90
 And ev'n his father smiled when playful wit,
 From his young bard, some haughty object hit.

From ancient times the borough where they dwelt
 Had mighty contest at elections felt.
 Sir Godfrey Ball, 'tis true, had held in pay
 Electors many for the trying day ;
 But in such golden chains to bind them all
 Required too much for e'en Sir Godfrey Ball.
 A member died, and, to supply his place,
 Two heroes enter'd for th' important race ; 100
 Sir Godfrey's friend and Earl Fitzdonnel's son,
 Lord Frederick Damer, both prepared to run ;
 And partial numbers saw with vast delight
 Their good young lord oppose the proud old knight.

Our poet's father, at a first request,
 Gave the young lord his vote and interest,
 And, what he could, our poet ; for he stung

THE PATRON

The foe by verse satiric, said and sung.
 Lord Frederick heard of all this youthful zeal,
 And felt as lords upon a canvass feel ; 110
 He read the satire, and he saw the use
 That such cool insult, and such keen abuse, }
 Might on the wavering minds of voting men produce ; []
 Then, too, his praises were in contrast seen,
 "A lord as noble as the knight was mean."

"I much rejoice," he cried, "such worth to find ;
 "To this the world must be no longer blind ;
 "His glory will descend from sire to son,
 "The Burns of English race, the happier Chatterton."
 Our poet's mind, now hurried and elate, 120
 Alarm'd the anxious parent for his fate ;
 Who saw with sorrow, should their friend succeed,
 That much discretion would the poet need.

Their friend succeeded, and repaid the zeal
 The poet felt, and made opposers feel,
 By praise (from lords how soothing and how sweet !)
 And invitation to his noble seat.

The father ponder'd, doubtful if the brain
 Of his proud boy such honour could sustain ;
 Pleased with the favours offer'd to a son, 130
 But seeing dangers few so ardent shun.

Thus, when they parted, to the youthful breast
 The father's fears were by his love impress'd :

"There you will find, my son, the courteous ease
 "That must subdue the soul it means to please ;

"That soft attention which ev'n beauty pays
 "To wake our passions, or provoke our praise ;

"There all the eye beholds will give delight,
 "Where every sense is flatter'd like the sight.

"This is your peril ; can you from such scene 140
 "Of splendour part, and feel your mind serene,

"And in the father's humble state resume
 "The frugal diet and the narrow room ?"

To this the youth with cheerful heart replied,
 Pleased with the trial, but as yet untried ;
 And while professing patience, should he fail,
 He suffer'd hope o'er reason to prevail.

Impatient, by the morning mail convey'd,
 The happy guest his promised visit paid;
 And now, arriving at the hall, he tried 150
 For air composed, serene and satisfied;
 As he had practised in his room alone,
 And there acquired a free and easy tone.
 There he had said, "Whatever the degree
 "A man obtains, what more than man is he?"
 And when arrived—"This room is but a room;
 "Can aught we see the steady soul o'ercome?
 "Let me in all a manly firmness show,
 "Upheld by talents, and their value know."

This reason urged; but it surpass'd his skill. 160
 To be in act as manly as in will:
 When he his lordship and the lady saw,
 Brave as he was, he felt oppress'd with awe;
 And spite of verse, that so much praise had won,
 The poet found he was the bailiff's son.

But dinner came, and the succeeding hours
 Fix'd his weak nerves, and raised his failing powers;
 Praised and assured, he ventured once or twice
 On some remark, and bravely broke the ice;
 So that at night, reflecting on his words, 170
 He found in time, he might converse with lords.

Now was the sister of his patron seen—
 A lovely creature, with majestic mien;
 Who, softly smiling while she look'd so fair,
 Praised the young poet with such friendly air;
 Such winning frankness in her looks express'd,
 And such attention to her brother's guest,
 That so much beauty, join'd with speech so kind,
 Raised strong emotions in the poet's mind;
 Till reason fail'd his bosom to defend 180
 From the sweet power of this enchanting friend.—
 Rash boy! what hope thy frantic mind invades?
 What love confuses, and what pride persuades?
 Awake to truth! shouldst thou deluded feed
 On hopes so groundless, thou art mad indeed.

What say'st thou, wise-one? "that all-powerful love
 "Can fortune's strong impediments remove;

THE PATRON

"Nor is it strange that worth should wed to worth,
"The pride of genius with the pride of birth."

While thou art dreaming thus, the beauty spies
Love in thy tremor, passion in thine eyes;
And, with th' amusement pleased, of conquest vain,
She seeks her pleasure, careless of thy pain;
She gives thee praise to humble and confound,
Smiles to ensnare, and flatters thee to wound.

190

Why has she said that in the lowest state
The noble mind insures a noble fate?
And why thy daring mind to glory call?
That thou may'st dare and suffer, soar and fall.
Beauties are tyrants, and if they can reign,
They have no feeling for their subject's pain;
Their victim's anguish gives their charms applause,
And their chief glory is the woe they cause.
Something of this was felt, in spite of love,
Which hope, in spite of reason, would remove.

200

Thus lived our youth, with conversation, books,
And Lady Emma's soul-subduing looks;
Lost in delight, astonish'd at his lot,
All prudence banish'd, all advice forgot—
Hopes, fears, and every thought, were fix'd upon the spot. 210[] }

'Twas autumn yet, and many a day must frown
On Brandon-Hall, ere went my lord to town;
Meantime the father, who had heard his boy
Lived in a round of luxury and joy,
And, justly thinking that the youth was one
Who, meeting danger, was unskill'd to shun;
Knowing his temper, virtue, spirit, zeal,
How prone to hope and trust, believe and feel:
These on the parent's soul their weight impress'd,
And thus he wrote the counsels of his breast.

220

"John, thou'rt a genius; thou hast some pretence,
"I think, to wit, but hast thou sterling sense?
"That which, like gold, may through the world go forth,
"And always pass for what 'tis truly worth?
"Whereas this genius, like a bill, must take
"Only the value our opinions make.

"Men famed for wit, of dangerous talents vain,

GEORGE CRABBE

"Treat those of common parts with proud disdain ;
 "The powers that wisdom would, improving, hide,
 "They blaze abroad with inconsiderate pride ; 230
 "While yet but mere probationers for fame,
 "They seize the honour they should then disclaim :
 "Honour so hurried to the light must fade ;
 "The lasting laurels flourish in the shade.
 "Genius is jealous ; I have heard of some
 "Who, if unnoticed, grew perversely dumb ;
 "Nay, different talents would their envy raise ;
 "Poets have sicken'd at a dancer's praise ;
 "And one, the happiest writer of his time,
 "Grew pale at hearing Reynolds was sublime ; 240
 "That Rutland's duchess wore a heavenly smile—
 "And I, said he, neglected all the while !
 "A waspish tribe are these, on gilded wings,
 "Humming their lays, and brandishing their stings ;
 "And thus they move their friends and foes among,
 "Prepared for soothing or satiric song.
 "Hear me, my boy ; thou hast a virtuous mind—
 "But be thy virtues of the sober kind ;
 "Be not a Quixote, ever up in arms
 "To give the guilty and the great alarms : 250
 "If never heeded, thy attack is vain ;
 "And if they heed thee, they'll attack again ;
 "Then, too, in striking at that heedless rate,
 "Thou in an instant may'st decide thy fate.
 "Leave admonition—let the vicar give
 "Rules how the nobles of his flock should live ;
 "Nor take that simple fancy to thy brain,
 "That thou canst cure the wicked and the vain.
 "Our Pope, they say, once entertain'd the whim,
 "Who fear'd not God should be afraid of him ; 260
 "But grant they fear'd him, was it further said,
 "That he reform'd the hearts he made afraid ?
 "Did Chartres mend ? Ward, Waters, and a score
 "Of flagrant felons, with his floggings sore ?
 "Was Cibber silenced ? No ; with vigour bless'd,
 "And brazen front, half earnest, half in jest,
 "He dared the bard to battle, and was seen

THE PATRON

"In all his glory match'd with Pope and spleen ;
"Himself he stripp'd, the harder blow to hit,
"Then boldly match'd his ribaldry with wit ; 270
"The poet's conquest Truth and Time proclaim,
"But yet the battle hurt his peace and fame.

"Strive not too much for favour ; seem at ease,
"And rather pleased thyself, than bent to please :
"Upon thy lord with decent care attend,
"But not too near ; thou canst not be a friend ;
"And favourite be not, 'tis a dangerous post—
"Is gain'd by labour, and by fortune lost.
"Talents like thine may make a man approved,
"But other talents trusted and beloved. 280
"Look round, my son, and thou wilt early see
"The kind of man thou art not form'd to be.

"The real favourites of the great are they
"Who to their views and wants attention pay,
"And pay it ever ; who, with all their skill,
"Dive to the heart, and learn the secret will ;
"If that be vicious, soon can they provide
"The favourite ill, and o'er the soul preside ;
"For vice is weakness, and the artful know
"Their power increases as the passions grow ; 290
"If indolent the pupil, hard their task ;
"Such minds will ever for amusement ask ;
"And great the labour for a man to choose
"Objects for one whom nothing can amuse !
"For ere those objects can the soul delight,
"They must to joy the soul herself excite ;
"Therefore it is, this patient, watchful kind
"With gentle friction stir the drowsy mind :
"Fix'd on their end, with caution they proceed,
"And sometimes give, and sometimes take the lead ; 300
"Will now a hint convey, and then retire,
"And let the spark awake the lingering fire ;
"Or seek new joys and livelier pleasures bring,
"To give the jaded sense a quick'ning spring.

"These arts, indeed, my son must not pursue ;
"Nor must he quarrel with the tribe that do :
"It is not safe another's crimes to know,

GEORGE CRABBE

“Nor is it wise our proper worth to show.—
“‘My lord,’ you say, ‘engaged me for that worth;’—
“True, and preserve it ready to come forth: 310
“If question’d, fairly answer—and, that done,
“Shrink back, be silent, and thy father’s son;
“For they who doubt thy talents scorn thy boast,
“But they who grant them will dislike thee most.
“Observe the prudent; they in silence sit,
“Display no learning, and affect no wit;
“They hazard nothing, nothing they assume,
“But know the useful art of *acting dumb*.
“Yet to their eyes each varying look appears,
“And every word finds entrance at their ears. 320
“Thou art religion’s advocate—take heed,
“Hurt not the cause thy pleasure ’tis to plead;
“With wine before thee, and with wits beside,
“Do not in strength of reas’ning powers confide;
“What seems to thee convincing, certain, plain,
“They will deny, and dare thee to maintain;
“And thus will triumph o’er thy eager youth,
“While thou wilt grieve for so disgracing truth.
“With pain I’ve seen, these wrangling wits among,
“Faith’s weak defenders, passionate and young; 330
“Weak thou art not, yet not enough on guard,
“Where wit and humour keep their watch and ward:
“Men gay and noisy will o’erwhelm thy sense,
“Then loudly laugh at Truth’s and thy expense;
“While the kind ladies will do all they can
“To check their mirth, and cry, ‘*The good young man!*’
“Prudence, my boy, forbids thee to commend
“The cause or party of thy noble friend;
“What are his praises worth, who must be known
“To take a patron’s maxims for his own? 340
“When ladies sing, or in thy presence play,
“Do not, dear John, in rapture melt away;
“’Tis not thy part, there will be list’ners round,
“To cry ‘*divine!*’ and dote upon the sound;
“Remember too, that though the poor have ears,
“They take not in the music of the spheres;
“They must not feel the warble and the thrill,

THE PATRON

"Or be dissolved in ecstasy at will ;
"Beside, 'tis freedom in a youth like thee
"To drop his awe, and deal in ecstasy ! 350
"In silent ease, at least in silence, dine,
"Nor one opinion start of food or wine :
"Thou know'st that all the science thou canst boast
"Is of thy father's simple boil'd and roast ;
"Nor always these ; he sometimes saved his cash,
"By interlinear days of frugal hash.
"Wine hadst thou seldom ; wilt thou be so vain
"As to decide on claret or champagne ?
"Dost thou from me derive this taste sublime,
"Who order port the dozen at a time ; 360
"When (every glass held precious in our eyes)
"We judg'd the value by the bottle's size ?
"Then, never merit for thy praise assume,
"Its worth well knows each servant in the room.
"Hard, boy, thy task, to steer thy way among
"That servile, supple, shrewd, insidious throng ;
"Who look upon thee as of doubtful race,
"An interloper, one who wants a place :
"Freedom with these let thy free soul condemn,
"Nor with thy heart's concerns associate them. 370
"Of all be cautious—but be most afraid
"Of the pale charms that grace my lady's maid ;
"Of those sweet dimples, of that fraudulent eye,
"The frequent glance, design'd for thee to spy ;
"The soft bewitching look, the fond bewailing sigh. }
"Let others frown and envy ; she the while []
"(Insidious syren !) will demurely smile ;
"And, for her gentle purpose, every day
"Inquire thy wants, and meet thee in thy way ;
"She has her blandishments, and, though so weak, 380
"Her person pleases, and her actions speak.
"At first her folly may her aim defeat ;
"But kindness shown at length will kindness meet.
"Have some offended ? them will she disdain,
"And, for thy sake, contempt and pity feign ;
"She hates the vulgar, she admires to look
"On woods and groves, and dotes upon a book ;

GEORGE CRABBE

"Let her once see thee on her features dwell,
"And hear one sigh—then, liberty, farewell.
"But, John, remember, we cannot maintain 390
"A poor, proud girl, extravagant and vain.
"Doubt much of friendship: shouldst thou find a friend
"Pleased to advise thee, anxious to commend;
"Should he the praises he has heard report,
"And confidence (in thee confiding) court;
"Much of neglectful patrons should he say,
"And then exclaim—'How long must merit stay;'
"Then show how high thy modest hopes may stretch,
"And point to stations far beyond thy reach:
"Let such designer, by thy conduct, see 400
"(Civil and cool) he makes no dupe of thee;
"And he will quit thee, as a man too wise
"For him to ruin first, and then despise.
"Such are thy dangers;—yet, if thou canst steer
"Past all the perils, all the quicksands clear,
"Then may'st thou profit; but if storms prevail,
"If foes beset thee, if thy spirits fail—
"No more of winds or waters be the sport,
"But in thy father's mansion find a port."
Our poet read—"It is, in truth," said he, 410
"Correct in part, but what is *this* to me?
"I love a foolish Abigail! in base
"And sordid office! fear not such disgrace:
"Am I so blind?"—"Or thou wouldst surely see
"That lady's fall, if she should stoop to thee."—
"The cases differ."—"True! for what surprise
"Could from thy marriage with the maid arise?
"But through the island would the shame be spread,
"Should the fair mistress deign with thee to wed."
John saw not this; and many a week had pass'd, 420
While the vain beauty held her victim fast;
The noble friend still condescension show'd,
And, as before, with praises overflow'd;
But his grave lady took a silent view
Of all that pass'd, and, smiling, pitied too.
Cold grew the foggy morn; the day was brief;
Loose on the cherry hung the crimson leaf;

THE PATRON

The dew dwelt ever on the herb; the woods
Roar'd with strong blasts, with mighty showers the floods;
All green was vanish'd, save of pine and yew, 430
That still display'd their melancholy hue;
Save the green holly with its berries red,
And the green moss that o'er the gravel spread.

To public views my lord must soon attend;
And soon the ladies—would they leave their friend?
The time was fix'd—approach'd—was near—was come,
The trying time that fill'd his soul with gloom.
Thoughtful our poet in the morning rose,
And cried, "One hour my fortune will disclose;
"Terrific hour! from thee have I to date 440
"Life's loftier views, or my degraded state;
"For now to be what I have been before
"Is so to fall, that I can rise no more."

The morning meal was past, and all around
The mansion rang with each discordant sound;
Haste was in every foot, and every look
The traveller's joy for London-journey spoke.
Not so our youth; whose feelings, at the noise
Of preparation, had no touch of joys;
He pensive stood, and saw each carriage drawn, 450
With lackeys mounted, ready on the lawn.
The ladies came; and John in terror threw
One painful glance, and then his eyes withdrew;
Not with such speed, but he in other eyes
With anguish read—"I pity but despise—
"Unhappy boy! presumptuous scribbler!—you
"To dream such dreams!—be sober, and adieu!"

Then came the noble friend—"And will my lord
"Vouchsafe no comfort? drop no soothing word?
"Yes, he must speak:" he speaks, "My good young friend,
"You know my views; upon my care depend; 461
"My hearty thanks to your good father pay,
"And be a student.—Harry, drive away."

Stillness reign'd all around; of late so full,
The busy scene deserted now and dull.
Stern is his nature who forbears to feel
Gloom o'er his spirits on such trials steal;

GEORGE CRABBE

Most keenly felt our poet as he went
 From room to room without a fix'd intent ;
 "And here," he thought, "I was caress'd ; admired 470
 "Were here my songs ; she smiled, and I aspired :
 "The change how grievous !" As he mused, a dame
 Busy and peevish to her duties came ;
 Aside the tables and the chairs she drew,
 And sang and mutter'd in the poet's view :—
 "This was her fortune ; here they leave the poor ;
 "Enjoy themselves, and think of us no more ;
 "I had a promise—" here his pride and shame
 Urged him to fly from this familiar dame ;
 He gave one farewell look, and by a coach 480
 Reach'd his own mansion at the night's approach.

His father met him with an anxious air,
 Heard his sad tale, and check'd what seem'd despair ;
 Hope was in him corrected, but alive ;
 My lord would something for a friend contrive ;
 His word was pledged ; our hero's feverish mind
 Admitted this, and half his grief resign'd.
 But when three months had fled, and every day
 Drew from the sickening hopes their strength away,
 The youth became abstracted, pensive, dull ; 490
 He utter'd nothing, though his heart was full.
 Teased by inquiring words and anxious looks,
 And all forgetful of his muse and books,
 Awake he mourn'd, but in his sleep perceived
 A lovely vision that his pain relieved ;
 His soul transported, hail'd the happy seat,
 Where once his pleasure was so pure and sweet ;
 Where joys departed came in blissful view,
 Till reason wak'd, and not a joy he knew.

Questions now vex'd his spirit, most from those 500
 Who are called friends, because they are not foes.
 "John !" they would say ; he, starting, turn'd around ;
 "John !" there was something shocking in the sound ;
 Ill brook'd he then the pert familiar phrase,
 The untaught freedom, and th' inquiring gaze ;
 Much was his temper touch'd, his spleen provoked,
 When ask'd how ladies talk'd, or walk'd, or look'd ?

THE PATRON

"What said my lord of politics? how spent
"He there his time? and was he glad he went?"

At length a letter came, both cool and brief, 510
But still it gave the burthen'd heart relief:
Though not inspired by lofty hopes, the youth
Placed much reliance on Lord Frederick's truth;
Summon'd to town, he thought the visit one
Where something fair and friendly would be done;
Although he judged not, as before his fall,
When all was love and promise at the hall.

Arrived in town, he early sought to know
The fate such dubious friendship would bestow;
At a tall building, trembling, he appear'd, 520
And his low rap was indistinctly heard;
A well-known servant came—"A while," said he,
"Be pleased to wait; my lord has company."

Alone our hero sate; the news in hand,
Which, though he read, he could not understand.
Cold was the day; in days so cold as these
There needs a fire, where minds and bodies freeze;
The vast and echoing room, the polish'd grate,
The crimson chairs, the sideboard with its plate;
The splendid sofa, which, though made for rest, 530
He then had thought it freedom to have press'd;
The shining tables, curiously inlaid,
Were all in comfortless proud style display'd;
And to the troubled feelings terror gave,
That made the once-dear friend the sick'ning slave.

"Was he forgotten?" Thrice upon his ear
Struck the loud clock, yet no relief was near;
Each rattling carriage, and each thundering stroke
On the loud door, the dream of fancy broke;
Oft as a servant chanced the way to come, 540
"Brings he a message?" no! he pass'd the room.
At length 'tis certain; "Sir you will attend
"At twelve on Thursday!" Thus the day had end.

Vex'd by these tedious hours of needless pain,
John left the noble mansion with disdain;
For there was something in that still, cold place,
That seem'd to threaten and portend disgrace.

Punctual again the modest rap declared
 The youth attended ; then was all prepared :
 For the same servant, by his lord's command, 550
 A paper offer'd to his trembling hand.
 "No more !" he cried ; "disdains he to afford
 "One kind expression, one consoling word ?"

With troubled spirit he began to read
 That "In the church my lord could not succeed ;"
 Who had "to peers of either kind applied,
 "And was with dignity and grace denied ;
 "While his own livings were by men possess'd,
 "Not likely in their chancels yet to rest ;
 "And therefore, all things weigh'd (as he, my lord, 560
 "Had done maturely, and he pledged his word),
 "Wisdom it seem'd for John to turn his view
 "To busier scenes, and bid the church adieu !"

Here grieved the youth ; he felt his father's pride
 Must with his own be shock'd and mortified ;
 But when he found his future comforts placed
 Where he, alas ! conceived himself disgraced—
 In some appointment on the London quays,
 He bade farewell to honour and to ease ;
 His spirit fell ; and, from that hour assured 570
 How vain his dreams, he suffer'd and was cured.

Our poet hurried on, with wish to fly
 From all mankind, to be conceal'd, and die.
 Alas ! what hopes, what high romantic views
 Did that one visit to the soul infuse,
 Which cherish'd with such love, 'twas worse than death }
 to lose ! []

Still he would strive, though painful was the strife,
 To walk in this appointed road of life ;
 On these low duties duteous he would wait,
 And patient bear the anguish of his fate. 580
 Thanks to the patron, but of coldest kind,
 Express'd the sadness of the poet's mind ;
 Whose heavy hours were pass'd with busy men,
 In the dull practice of th' official pen ;
 Who to superiors must in time impart
 (The custom this) his progress in their art.

THE PATRON

But so had grief on his perception wrought,
That all unheeded were the duties taught;
No answers gave he when his trial came,
Silent he stood, but suffering without shame;
And they observed that words severe or kind
Made no impression on his wounded mind;
For all perceived from whence his failure rose—
Some grief whose cause he deign'd not to disclose.

590

A soul averse from scenes and works so new;
Fear, ever shrinking from the vulgar crew;
Distaste for each mechanic law and rule,
Thoughts of past honour and a patron cool;
A grieving parent, and a feeling mind,
Timid and ardent, tender and refined:
These all with mighty force the youth assail'd,
Till his soul fainted, and his reason fail'd.

600

When this was known, and some debate arose
How they who saw it should the fact disclose,
He found their purpose, and in terror fled
From unseen kindness, with mistaken dread.

Meantime the parent was distress'd to find
His son no longer for a priest design'd;
But still he gain'd some comfort by the news
Of John's promotion, though with humbler views;
For he conceived that in no distant time
The boy would learn to scramble and to climb.
He little thought a son, his hope and pride,
His favour'd boy, was now a home denied:
Yes! while the parent was intent to trace
How men in office climb from place to place,
By day, by night, o'er moor and heath and hill,
Roved the sad youth, with ever-changing will,
Of every aid bereft, exposed to every ill.

610

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[]

620

Thus as he sate, absorb'd in all the care
And all the hope that anxious fathers share,
A friend abruptly to his presence brought,
With trembling hand, the subject of his thought,
Whom he had found afflicted and subdued
By hunger, sorrow, cold, and solitude.

Silent he enter'd the forgotten room

GEORGE CRABBE

As ghostly forms may be conceived to come ;
With sorrow-shrunk face and hair upright,
He look'd dismay, neglect, despair, affright ;
But, dead to comfort, and on misery thrown,
His parent's loss he felt not, nor his own.

630

The good man, struck with horror, cried aloud,
And drew around him an astonish'd crowd ;
The sons and servants to the father ran,
To share the feelings of the grieved old man.

"Our brother, speak !" they all exclaim'd ; "explain
"Thy grief, thy suffering ;"—but they ask'd in vain :
The friend told all he knew ; and all was known,
Save the sad causes whence the ills had grown.
But, if obscure the cause, they all agreed

640

From rest and kindness must the cure proceed :
And he was cured ; for quiet, love, and care,
Strove with the gloom, and broke on the despair.
Yet slow their progress ; and, as vapours move
Dense and reluctant from the wintry grove ;
All is confusion till the morning light
Gives the dim scene obscurely to the sight ;
More and yet more defined the trunks appear,
Till the wild prospect stands distinct and clear—
So the dark mind of our young poet grew
Clear and sedate ; the dreadful mist withdrew ;
And he resembled that bleak wintry scene,
Sad, though unclouded ; dismal, though serene.

650

At times he utter'd, "What a dream was mine !
"And what a prospect ! glorious and divine !
"Oh ! in that room, and on that night, to see
"These looks, that sweetness beaming all on me ;
"That syren-flattery—and to send me then,
"Hope-raised and soften'd, to those heartless men ;
"That dark-brow'd stern director, pleased to show
"Knowledge of subjects I disdain'd to know ;
"Cold and controlling—but 'tis gone, 'tis past ;
"I had my trial, and have peace at last."

660

Now grew the youth resign'd ; he bade adieu
To all that hope, to all that fancy drew ;
His frame was languid, and the hectic heat

THE PATRON

Flush'd on his pallid face, and countless beat
The quick'ning pulse, and faint the limbs that bore
The slender form that soon would breathe no more.

Then hope of holy kind the soul sustain'd,
And not a lingering thought of earth remain'd ;
Now Heaven had all, and he could smile at love,
And the wild sallies of his youth reprove ;
Then could he dwell upon the tempting days,
The proud aspiring thought, the partial praise ;
Victorious now, his worldly views were closed,
And on the bed of death the youth reposed.

670

The father grieved—but, as the poet's heart
Was all unfitted for his earthly part ;
As, he conceived, some other haughty fair
Would, had he lived, have led him to despair ;
As, with this fear, the silent grave shut out
All feverish hope, and all tormenting doubt ;
While the strong faith the pious youth possess'd,
His hope enlivening, gave his sorrows rest :
Soothed by these thoughts, he felt a mournful joy
For his aspiring and devoted boy.

680

Meantime the news through various channels spread :
The youth, once favour'd with such praise, was dead.
“Emma,” the lady cried, “my words attend,
“Your syren-smiles have kill'd your humble friend ;
“The hope you raised can now delude no more,
“Nor charms, that once inspired, can now restore.”

690

Faint was the flush of anger and of shame,
That o'er the cheek of conscious beauty came.
“You censure not,” said she, “the sun's bright rays,
“When fools imprudent dare the dangerous gaze ;
“And, should a stripling look till he were blind,
“You would not justly call the light unkind.—

“But is he dead? and am I to suppose
“The power of poison in such looks as those?”

700

She spoke, and, pointing to the mirror, cast
A pleased gay glance, and curtsied as she pass'd.

My lord, to whom the poet's fate was told,
Was much affected, for a man so cold.
“Dead!” said his lordship, “run distracted, mad!

85

GEORGE CRABBE

"Upon my soul I'm sorry for the lad ;
"And now, no doubt, th' obliging world will say
"That my harsh usage help'd him on his way.
"What ! I suppose, I should have nursed his muse, 710
"And with champagne have brighten'd up his views :
"Then had he made me famed my whole life long,
"And stunn'd my ears with gratitude and song.
"Still, should the father hear that I regret
"Our joint misfortune—Yes ! I'll not forget."—

Thus they.—The father to his grave convey'd
The son he loved, and his last duties paid.

"There lies my boy," he cried, "of care bereft,
"And, Heav'n be praised, I've not a genius left :
"No one among ye, sons ! is doom'd to live 720
"On high-raised hopes of what the great may give ;
"None, with exalted views and fortunes mean,
"To die in anguish, or to live in spleen.
"Your pious brother soon escaped the strife
"Of such contention, but it cost his life ;
"You then, my sons, upon yourselves depend,
"And in your own exertions find the friend."

TALE VI.

THE FRANK COURTSHIP.

Yes, faith ; it is my cousin's duty to make curtsy, and say, " Father, as it please you ;" but [yet] for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another curtsy, and say, " Father, as it pleases me."

Much Ado about Nothing, A& II. Scene 1.

He cannot flatter, he !

An honest mind and plain—he must speak truth.

King Lear, A& II. Scene 2.

God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another ; you jig, you amble, [and you lisp, and] nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance.

Hamlet, A& III. Scene 1.

What fire is in mine ears ? Can this be true ?

[Stand I condemn'd] for pride and scorn so much ?

Much Ado about Nothing, A& [III.] Scene 1.

TALE VI.

THE FRANK COURTSHIP.

GRAVE Jonas Kindred, Sybil Kindred's sire,
Was six feet high, and look'd six inches higher ;
Erect, morose, determined, solemn, slow,
Who knew the man, could never cease to know ;
His faithful spouse, when Jonas was not by,
Had a firm presence and a steady eye ;
But with her husband dropp'd her look and tone,
And Jonas ruled unquestion'd and alone.

He read, and oft would quote the sacred words,
How pious husbands of their wives were lords ;
Sarah called Abraham lord ! and who could be,
So Jonas thought, a greater man than he ?
Himself he view'd with undisguised respect,
And never pardon'd freedom or neglect.

10

They had one daughter, and this favourite child
Had oft the father of his spleen beguiled ;
Soothed by attention from her early years,
She gain'd all wishes by her smiles or tears :
But Sybil then was in that playful time,
When contradiction is not held a crime ;
When parents yield their children idle praise
For faults corrected in their after days.

20

Peace in the sober house of Jonas dwelt,
Where each his duty and his station felt :
Yet not that peace some favour'd mortals find,
In equal views and harmony of mind ;
Not the soft peace that blesses those who love,

THE FRANK COURTSHIP

Where all with one consent in union move ;
But it was that which one superior will
Commands, by making all inferiors still ; 30
Who bids all murmurs, all objections cease,
And with imperious voice announces—Peace !

They were, to wit, a remnant of that crew,
Who, as their foes maintain, their sovereign slew :
An independent race, precise, correct,
Who ever married in the kindred sect.
No son or daughter of their order wed
A friend to England's king who lost his head ;
Cromwell was still their saint, and, when they met,
They mourn'd that saints¹ were not our rulers yet. 40

Fix'd were their habits ; they arose betimes,
Then pray'd their hour, and sang their party-rhymes :
Their meals were plenteous, regular, and plain ;
The trade of Jonas brought him constant gain ;
Vender of hops and malt, of coals and corn—
And, like his father, he was merchant born.
Neat was their house ; each table, chair, and stool,
Stood in its place, or moving moved by rule ;
No lively print or picture graced the room ;
A plain brown paper lent its decent gloom ; 50
But here the eye, in glancing round, survey'd
A small recess that seem'd for china made ;
Such pleasing pictures seem'd this pencill'd ware,
That few would search for nobler objects there—
Yet, turn'd by chosen friends, and there appear'd
His stern, strong features, whom they all revered ;
For there in lofty air was seen to stand
The bold protector of the conquer'd land ;
Drawn in that look with which he wept and swore,
Turn'd out the members, and made fast the door, 60
Ridding the house of every knave and drone ;
Forced, though it grieved his soul, to rule alone.
The stern, still smile each friend, approving, gave ;
Then turn'd the view, and all again were grave.

¹ This appellation is here used not ironically, nor with malignity ; but it is taken merely to designate a morosely devout people, with peculiar austerity of manners.

GEORGE CRABBE

There stood a clock, though small the owner's need—
For habit told when all things should proceed.
Few their amusements, but, when friends appear'd,
They with the world's distress their spirits cheer'd;
The nation's guilt, that would not long endure
The reign of men so modest and so pure. 70
Their town was large, and seldom pass'd a day
But some had fail'd, and others gone astray;
Clerks had absconded, wives eloped, girls flown
To Gretna-Green, or sons rebellious grown;
Quarrels and fires arose;—and it was plain
The times were bad; the saints had ceased to reign!
A few yet lived to languish and to mourn
For good old manners, never to return.

Jonas had sisters, and of these was one
Who lost a husband and an only son: 80
Twelve months her sables she in sorrow wore,
And mourn'd so long that she could mourn no more.
Distant from Jonas, and from all her race,
She now resided in a lively place;
There, by the sect unseen, at whist she play'd,
Nor was of churchmen or their church afraid.
If much of this the graver brother heard,
He something censured, but he little fear'd;
He knew her rich and frugal; for the rest,
He felt no care, or, if he felt, suppress'd; 90
Nor, for companion when she ask'd her niece,
Had he suspicions that disturb'd his peace;
Frugal and rich, these virtues as a charm
Preserved the thoughtful man from all alarm;
An infant yet, she soon would home return,
Nor stay the manners of the world to learn;
Meantime his boys would all his care engross,
And be his comforts if he felt the loss.

The sprightly Sybil, pleased and unconfined,
Felt the pure pleasure of the op'ning mind: 100
All here was gay and cheerful—all at home
Unvaried quiet and unruffled gloom.
There were no changes, and amusements few;
Here, all was varied, wonderful, and new;

THE FRANK COURTSHIP

There were plain meals, plain dresses, and grave looks—
Here, gay companions and amusing books ;
And the young beauty soon began to taste
The light vocations of the scene she graced.

A man of business feels it as a crime
On calls domestic to consume his time ; 110
Yet this grave man had not so cold a heart,
But with his daughter he was grieved to part ;
And he demanded that in every year
The aunt and niece should at his house appear.

“Yes ! we must go, my child, and by our dress
“A grave conformity of mind express ;
“Must sing at meeting, and from cards refrain,
“The more t’ enjoy when we return again.”

Thus spake the aunt, and the discerning child
Was pleased to learn how fathers are beguiled. 120
Her artful part the young dissembler took,
And from the matron caught th’ approving look.
When thrice the friends had met, excuse was sent
For more delay, and Jonas was content ;
Till a tall maiden by her sire was seen,
In all the bloom and beauty of sixteen ;
He gazed admiring ;—she, with visage prim,
Glanced an arch look of gravity on him ;
For she was gay at heart, but wore disguise,
And stood a vestal in her father’s eyes— 130
Pure, pensive, simple, sad ; the damsel’s heart,
When Jonas praised, reproved her for the part ;
For Sybil, fond of pleasure, gay and light,
Had still a secret bias to the right ;
Vain as she was—and flattery made her vain—
Her simulation gave her bosom pain.

Again return’d, the matron and the niece
Found the late quiet gave their joy increase ;
The aunt, infirm, no more her visits paid,
But still with her sojourn’d the favourite maid. 140
Letters were sent when franks could be procured ;
And, when they could not, silence was endured.
All were in health, and, if they older grew,
It seem’d a fact that none among them knew ;

GEORGE CRABBE

The aunt and niece still led a pleasant life,
And quiet days had Jonas and his wife.

Near him a widow dwelt of worthy fame :
Like his her manners, and her creed the same.
The wealth her husband left her care retain'd
For one tall youth, and widow she remain'd ;
His love respectful all her care repaid,
Her wishes watch'd, and her commands obey'd.

150

Sober he was and grave from early youth,
Mindful of forms, but more intent on truth ;
In a light drab he uniformly dress'd,
And look serene th' unruffled mind express'd ;
A hat with ample verge his brows o'erspread,
And his brown locks curl'd graceful on his head ;
Yet might observers in his speaking eye

Some observation, some acuteness spy ;
The friendly thought it keen, the treacherous deem'd it sly. } 160

Yet not a crime could foe or friend detect ;
His actions all were, like his speech, correct ;
And they who jested on a mind so sound,
Upon his virtues must their laughter found :
'Chaste, sober, solemn,' and 'devout' they named
Him who was thus, and not of *this* ashamed.

Such were the virtues Jonas found in one
In whom he warmly wish'd to find a son.
Three years had pass'd since he had Sybil seen ;
But she was doubtless what she once had been—
Lovely and mild, obedient and discreet :
The pair must love whenever they should meet ;
Then, ere the widow or her son should choose
Some happier maid, he would explain his views.
Now she, like him, was politic and shrewd,
With strong desire of lawful gain embued ;
To all he said, she bow'd with much respect,
Pleased to comply, yet seeming to reject ;
Cool, and yet eager, each admired the strength
Of the opponent, and agreed at length.

170

As a drawn battle shows to each a force,
Powerful as his, he honours it of course :
So in these neighbours, each the power discern'd,

180

THE FRANK COURTSHIP

And gave the praise that was to each return'd.

Jonas now ask'd his daughter; and the aunt,
Though loth to lose her, was obliged to grant.—

But would not Sybil to the matron cling,
And fear to leave the shelter of her wing?

No! in the young there lives a love of change, 190

And to the easy they prefer the strange!

Then too the joys she once pursued with zeal,
From whist and visits sprung, she ceased to feel;

When with the matrons Sybil first sat down,

To cut for partners and to stake her crown,

This to the youthful maid preferment seem'd,

Who thought [that] woman she was then esteem'd;

But in few years, when she perceived, indeed,

The real woman to the girl succeed,

No longer tricks and honours fill'd her mind, 200

But other feelings, not so well defined.

She then reluctant grew, and thought it hard,

To sit and ponder o'er an ugly card;

Rather the nut-tree shade the nymph preferr'd,

Pleased with the pensive gloom and evening bird;

Thither, from company retired, she took

The silent walk, or read the fav'rite book.

The father's letter, sudden, short, and kind,

Awaked her wonder, and disturb'd her mind;

She found new dreams upon her fancy seize, 210

Wild roving thoughts and endless reveries.

The parting came;—and, when the aunt perceived

The tears of Sybil, and how much she grieved,

To love for her that tender grief she laid,

That various, soft, contending passions made.

When Sybil rested in her father's arms,

His pride exulted in a daughter's charms;

A maid accomplish'd he was pleased to find,

Nor seem'd the form more lovely than the mind.

But when the fit of pride and fondness fled, 220

He saw his judgment by his hopes misled;

High were the lady's spirits, far more free

Her mode of speaking than a maid's should be;

Too much, as Jonas thought, she seem'd to know,

And all her knowledge was disposed to show :
 "Too gay her dress, like theirs who idly dote
 "On a young coxcomb, or a coxcomb's coat ;
 "In foolish spirits when our friends appear,
 "And vainly grave when not a man is near."

Thus Jonas, adding to his sorrow blame,
 And terms disdainful to his sister's name :—

"The sinful wretch has by her arts defiled
 "The ductile spirit of my darling child."

"The maid is virtuous," said the dame.—Quoth he,

"Let her give proof, by acting virtuously :

"Is it in gaping when the elders pray ?

"In reading nonsense half a summer's day ?

"In those mock forms that she delights to trace,

"Or her loud laughs in Hezekiah's face ?

"She—O Susannah !—to the world belongs ;

"She loves the follies of its idle throngs,

"And reads soft tales of love, and sings love's soft'ning songs. []

"But, as our friend is yet delay'd in town,

"We must prepare her till the youth comes down ;

"You shall advise the maiden ; I will threat ;

"Her fears and hopes may yield us comfort yet."

Now the grave father took the lass aside,
 Demanding sternly, "Wilt thou be a bride ?"

She answer'd, calling up an air sedate,

"I have not vow'd against the holy state."

"No folly, Sybil," said the parent ; "know

"What to their parents virtuous maidens owe :

"A worthy, wealthy youth, whom I approve,

"Must thou prepare to honour and to love.

"Formal to thee his air and dress may seem,

"But the good youth is worthy of esteem ;

"Shouldst thou with rudeness treat him, of disdain

"Should he with justice or of slight complain,

"Or of one taunting speech give certain proof :

"Girl ! I reject thee from my sober roof."

"My aunt," said Sybil, "will with pride protect

"One whom a father can for this reject ;

"Nor shall a formal, rigid, soul-less boy

"My manners alter, or my views destroy !"

THE FRANK COURTSHIP

Jonas [then] lifted up his hands on high,
And, utt'ring something 'twixt a groan and sigh,
Left the determined maid her doubtful mother by.

}
[]

"Hear me," she said; "incline thy heart, my child,

"And fix thy fancy on a man so mild;

"Thy father, Sybil, never could be moved

270

"By one who loved him, or by one he loved.

"Union like ours is but a bargain made

"By slave and tyrant—he will be obey'd,

"Then calls the quiet comfort;—but thy youth

"Is mild by nature, and as frank as truth."

"But will he love?" said Sybil; "I am told

"That these mild creatures are by nature cold."

"Alas!" the matron answer'd, "much I dread

"That dangerous love by which the young are led!

280

"That love is earthy; you the creature prize,

"And trust your feelings and believe your eyes:

"Can eyes and feelings inward worth descry?

"No! my fair daughter, on our choice rely!

"Your love, like that display'd upon the stage,

"Indulged is folly, and opposed is rage;—

"More prudent love our sober couples show,

"All that to mortal beings mortals owe.

"All flesh is grass—before you give a heart,

"Remember, Sybil, that in death you part;

"And, should your husband die before your love,

290

"What needless anguish must a widow prove!

"No! my fair child, let all such visions cease;

"Yield but esteem, and only try for peace."

"I must be loved," said Sybil; "I must see

"The man in terrors who aspires to me;

"At my forbidding frown his heart must ache,

"His tongue must falter, and his frame must shake;

"And, if I grant him at my feet to kneel,

"What trembling, fearful pleasure must he feel;

"Nay, such the raptures that my smiles inspire,

300

"That reason's self must for a time retire."

"Alas! for good Josiah," said the dame,

"These wicked thoughts would fill his soul with shame.

"He kneel and tremble at a thing of dust!

GEORGE CRABBE

"He cannot, child."—The child replied, "He must."

They ceased; the matron left her with a frown;
So Jonas met her when the youth came down.

"Behold," said he, "thy future spouse attends;
"Receive him, daughter, as the best of friends;
"Observe, respect him—humble be each word,
"That welcomes home thy husband and thy lord."

310

Forewarn'd, thought Sybil, with a bitter smile,
I shall prepare my manner and my style.

Ere yet Josiah enter'd on his task,

The father met him:—"Deign to wear a mask

"A few dull days, Josiah—but a few—

"It is our duty, and the sex's due;

"I wore it once, and every grateful wife

"Repays it with obedience through her life:

"Have no regard to Sybil's dress, have none

320

"To her pert language, to her flippant tone:

"Henceforward thou shalt rule unquestion'd and alone; []

"And she thy pleasure in thy looks shall seek—

"How she shall dress, and whether she may speak."

A sober smile return'd the youth, and said,

"Can I cause fear, who am myself afraid?"

Sybil, meantime, sat thoughtful in her room,
And often wonder'd—"Will the creature come?"

"Nothing shall tempt, shall force me to bestow

"My hand upon him—yet I wish to know."

330

The door unclosed, and she beheld her sire

Lead in the youth, then hasten to retire.

"Daughter, my friend—my daughter, friend," he cried,

And gave a meaning look, and stepp'd aside;

That look contain'd a mingled threat and prayer,

"Do take him, child—offend him, if you dare."

The couple gazed—were silent; and the maid

Look'd in his face, to make the man afraid;

The man, unmoved, upon the maiden cast

A steady view—so salutation pass'd;

340

But in this instant Sybil's eye had seen

The tall fair person, and the still staid mien;

The glow that temp'rance o'er the cheek had spread,

Where the soft down half veil'd the purest red;

THE FRANK COURTSHIP

And the serene deportment that proclaim'd
 A heart unspotted, and a life unblamed.
 But then with these she saw attire too plain,
 The pale brown coat, though worn without a stain;
 The formal air, and something of the pride
 That indicates the wealth it seems to hide;
 And looks that were not, she conceived, exempt
 From a proud pity, or a sly contempt. 350

Josiah's eyes had their employment too,
 Engaged and soften'd by so bright a view:
 A fair and meaning face, an eye of fire,
 That check'd the bold, and made the free retire.
 But then with these he mark'd the studied dress
 And lofty air, that scorn or pride express;
 With that insidious look, that seem'd to hide
 In an affected smile the scorn and pride;
 And if his mind the virgin's meaning caught,
 He saw a foe with treacherous purpose fraught—
 Captive the heart to take, and to reject it caught. 360
 []

Silent they sate—thought Sybil, that he seeks
 Something, no doubt; I wonder if he speaks.
 Scarcely she wonder'd, when these accents fell
 Slow in her ear—"Fair maiden, art thou well?"—
 "Art thou physician?" she replied; "my hand,
 "My pulse, at least, shall be at thy command."

She said—and saw, surprised, Josiah kneel, 370
 And gave his lips the offer'd pulse to feel;
 The rosy colour rising in her cheek
 Seem'd that surprise, unmix'd with wrath, to speak;
 Then sternness she assumed, and—"Doctor, tell,
 "Thy words cannot alarm me—am I well?"

"Thou art," said he; "and yet thy dress so light,
 "I do conceive, some danger must excite."
 "In whom?" said Sybil, with a look demure;
 "In more," said he, "than I expect to cure.
 "I, in thy light luxuriant robe, behold 380
 "Want and excess, abounding and yet cold:
 "Here needed, there display'd, in many a wanton fold; []
 "Both health and beauty, learned authors show,
 "From a just medium in our clothing flow."

GEORGE CRABBE

"Proceed, good doctor; if so great my need,
"What is thy fee? Good doctor! pray proceed."

"Large is my fee, fair lady, but I take
"None till some progress in my cure I make.
"Thou hast disease, fair maiden; thou art vain;
"Within that face sit insult and disdain;
"Thou art enamour'd of thyself; my art
"Can see the naughty malice of thy heart;
"With a strong pleasure would thy bosom move,
"Were I to own thy power, and ask thy love;
"And such thy beauty, damsel, that I might,
"But for thy pride, feel danger in thy sight,
"And lose my present peace in dreams of vain delight."

390

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[]

"And can thy patients," said the nymph, "endure
"Physic like this? and will it work a cure?"

"Such is my hope, fair damsel; thou, I find,
"Hast the true tokens of a noble mind;
"But the world wins thee, Sybil, and thy joys
"Are placed in trifles, fashions, follies, toys;
"Thou hast sought pleasure in the world around,
"That in thine own pure bosom should be found.
"Did all that world admire thee, praise and love,
"Could it the least of nature's pains remove?
"Could it for errors, follies, sins atone,
"Or give thee comfort, thoughtful and alone?
"It has, believe me, maid, no power to charm
"Thy soul from sorrow, or thy flesh from harm:
"Turn then, fair creature, from a world of sin,
"And seek the jewel happiness within."

400

410

"Speak'st thou at meeting?" said the nymph; "thy speech
"Is that of mortal very prone to teach;
"But wouldst thou, doctor, from the patient learn
"Thine own disease?—The cure is thy concern."

"Yea, with good will."—"Then know, 'tis thy complaint,
"That, for a sinner, thou'rt too much a saint;
"Hast too much show of the sedate and pure,
"And without cause art formal and demure:
"This makes a man unsocial, unpolite;
"Odious when wrong, and insolent if right.
"Thou may'st be good, but why should goodness be

420

THE FRANK COURTSHIP

"Wrapt in a garb of such formality ?
"Thy person well might please a damsel's eye,
"In decent habit with a scarlet dye ;
"But, jest apart—what virtue canst thou trace
"In that broad brim that hides thy sober face ?
"Does that long-skirted drab, that over-nice 430
"And formal clothing, prove a scorn of vice ?
"Then for thine accent—what in sound can be
"So void of grace as dull monotony ?
"Love has a thousand varied notes to move
"The human heart—thou may'st not speak of love
"Till thou hast cast thy formal ways aside,
"And those becoming youth and nature tried ;
"Not till exterior freedom, spirit, ease,
"Prove it thy study and delight to please ;
"Not till these follies meet thy just disdain, 440
"While yet thy virtues and thy worth remain."
"This is severe !—Oh ! maiden, wilt not thou
"Something for habits, manners, modes, allow ?"—
"Yes ! but allowing much, I much require,
"In my behalf, for manners, modes, attire !"
"True, lovely Sybil ; and, this point agreed,
"Let me to those of greater weight proceed :
"Thy father"—"Nay," she quickly interposed,
"Good doctor, here our conference is closed !"
Then left the youth, who, lost in his retreat, 450
Pass'd the good matron on her garden-seat ;
His looks were troubled, and his air, once mild
And calm, was hurried :—"My audacious child !"
Exclaim'd the dame, "I read what she has done
"In thy displeasure—Ah ! the thoughtless one ;
"But yet, Josiah, to my stern good man
"Speak of the maid as mildly as you can.
"Can you not seem to woo a little while
"The daughter's will, the father to beguile,
"So that his wrath in time may wear away ? 460
"Will you preserve our peace, Josiah ? say !"
"Yes ! my good neighbour," said the gentle youth,
"Rely securely on my care and truth ;
"And, should thy comfort with my efforts cease,

GEORGE CRABBE

"And only then—perpetual is thy peace."

The dame had doubts: she well his virtues knew,
His deeds were friendly, and his words were true;

"But to address this vixen is a task

"He is ashamed to take, and I to ask."

Soon as the father from Josiah learn'd

470

What pass'd with Sybil, he the truth discern'd.

"He loves," the man exclaim'd, "he loves, 'tis plain,

"The thoughtless girl, and shall he love in vain?

"She may be stubborn, but she shall be tried,

"Born as she is of wilfulness and pride."

With anger fraught, but willing to persuade,

The wrathful father met the smiling maid.

"Sybil," said he, "I long, and yet I dread

"To know thy conduct—hath Josiah fled,

"And, grieved and fretted by thy scornful air,

480

"For his lost peace betaken him to prayer?

"Couldst thou his pure and modest mind distress,

"By vile remarks upon his speech, address,

"Attire, and voice?"—"All this I must confess."—

}
[]

"Unhappy child! what labour will it cost

"To win him back!"—"I do not think him lost."

"Courts he then, trifier, insult and disdain?"—

"No: but from these he courts me to refrain."—

"Then hear me, Sybil: should Josiah leave

"Thy father's house?"—"My father's child would grieve."—

"That is of grace; and if he come again

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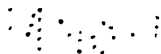
"To speak of love?"—"I might from grief refrain."—

"Then wilt thou, daughter, our design embrace?"—

"Can I resist it, if it be of grace?"—

"Dear child! in three plain words thy mind express—

"Wilt thou have this good youth?"—"Dear father! yes."



TALE VII.

THE WIDOW'S TALE.

Ah me! for aught that I could ever read,
[Could] ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth;
But, either it was different in blood, [...]
Or else misgrafted in respect of years, [...]
Or else it stood upon the choice of friends, [...]
Or if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it.
Midsummer Night's Dream, Act I. Scene 1.

Oh! thou didst then ne'er love so heartily,
If thou rememberest not the slightest folly
That ever love did make thee run into...
As You Like It, Act II. Scene 4.

Cry the man mercy; love him; take his offer.
As You Like It, Act III. Scene 5.

TALE VII.

THE WIDOW'S TALE.

TO farmer Moss, in Langar Vale, came down
His only daughter, from her school in town ;
A tender, timid maid ! who knew not how
To pass a pig-sty, or to face a cow :
Smiling she came, with petty talents graced,
A fair complexion, and a slender waist.

Used to spare meals, disposed in manner pure,
Her father's kitchen she could ill endure ;
Where by the steaming beef he hungry sat,
And laid at once a pound upon his plate ; 10
Hot from the field, her eager brother seized
An equal part, and hunger's rage appeased ;
The air, surcharged with moisture, flagg'd around,
And the offended damsel sigh'd and frown'd ;
The swelling fat in lumps conglomerate laid,
And fancy's sickness seized the loathing maid.
But, when the men beside their station took,
The maidens with them, and with these the cook ;
When one huge wooden bowl before them stood,
Fill'd with huge balls of farinaceous food ; 20
With bacon, mass saline, where never lean
Beneath the brown and bristly rind was seen ;
When from a single horn the party drew
Their copious draughts of heavy ale and new ;
When the coarse cloth she saw, with many a stain,
Soil'd by rude hinds who cut and came again—
She could not breathe ; but, with a heavy sigh,
Rein'd the fair neck, and shut th' offended eye ;
She minced the sanguine flesh in frustums fine,
And wonder'd much to see the creatures dine : 30

THE WIDOW'S TALE

When she resolved her father's heart to move,
If hearts of farmers were alive to love.

She now entreated by herself to sit
In the small parlour, if papa thought fit,
And there to dine, to read, to work alone.—
“No!” said the farmer, in an angry tone;
“These are your school-taught airs; your mother's pride
“Would send you there; but I am now your guide.—
“Arise betimes, our early meal prepare,
“And, this despatch'd, let business be your care; 40
“Look to the lasses, let there not be one
“Who lacks attention, till her tasks be done;
“In every household work your portion take,
“And what you make not, see that others make.
“At leisure times attend the wheel, and see
“The whit'ning web be sprinkled on the [lea];
“When thus employ'd, should our young neighbour view
“An useful lass, you may have more to do.”

Dreadful were these commands; but worse than these
The parting hint—a farmer could not please: 50
’Tis true she had without abhorrence seen
Young Harry Carr, when he was smart and clean;
But to be married—be a farmer's wife—
A slave! a drudge!—she could not, for her life.

With swimming eyes the fretful nymph withdrew,
And, deeply sighing, to her chamber flew;
There on her knees, to Heav'n she grieving pray'd
For change of prospect to a tortured maid.

Harry, a youth whose late-departed sire
Had left him all industrious men require, 60
Saw the pale beauty—and her shape and air
Engaged him much, and yet he must forbear:
“For my small farm what can the damsel do?”
He said—then stopp'd to take another view:
“Pity so sweet a lass will nothing learn
“Of household cares—for what can beauty earn
“By those small arts which they at school attain,
“That keep them useless, and yet make them vain?”

This luckless damsel look'd the village round,
To find a friend, and one was quickly found; 70

GEORGE CRABBE

A pensive widow—whose mild air and dress
Pleased the sad nymph, who wish'd her soul's distress
To one so seeming kind, confiding, to confess.—

}
[]

"What lady that?" the anxious lass inquired,
Who then beheld the one she most admired.

"Here," said the brother, "are no ladies seen—

"That is a widow dwelling on the green ;

"A dainty dame, who can but barely live

"On her poor pittance, yet contrives to give ;

"She happier days has known, but seems at ease,

80

"And you may call her lady, if you please.

"But if you wish, good sister, to improve,

"You shall see twenty better worth your love."

These Nancy met ; but, spite of all they taught,

This useless widow was the one she sought.

The father growl'd ; but said he knew no harm

In such connexion that could give alarm ;

"And if we thwart the trifler in her course,

"'Tis odds against us she will take a worse."

Then met the friends ; the widow heard the sigh

90

That ask'd at once compassion and reply :—

"Would you, my child, converse with one so poor,

"Yours were the kindness—yonder is my door ;

"And, save the time that we in public pray,

"From that poor cottage I but rarely stray."

There went the nymph, and made her strong complaints,
Painting her wo as injured feeling paints.

"Oh, dearest friend ! do think how one must feel,

"Shock'd all day long, and sicken'd every meal ;

"Could you behold our kitchen (and to you

100

"A scene so shocking must indeed be new),

"A mind like yours, with true refinement graced,

"Would let no vulgar scenes pollute your taste ;

"And yet, in truth, from such a polish'd mind

"All base ideas must resistance find,

"And sordid pictures from the fancy pass,

"As the breath startles from the polish'd glass.

"Here you enjoy a sweet romantic scene,

"Without so pleasant, and within so clean ;

"These twining jess'mines, what delicious gloom

110

THE WIDOW'S TALE

"And soothing fragrance yield they to the room !
"What lovely garden ! there you oft retire,
"And tales of wo and tenderness admire :
"In that neat case, your books, in order placed,
"Soothe the full soul, and charm the cultured taste ;
"And thus, while all about you wears a charm,
"How must you scorn the farmer and the farm !"

The widow smiled, and "Know you not," said she, }
"How much these farmers scorn or pity me ; }
"Who see what you admire, and laugh at all they see ? 120[] }
"True, their opinion alters not my fate,
"By falsely judging of an humble state :
"This garden, you with such delight behold,
"Tempt not a feeble dame who dreads the cold ;
"These plants, which please so well your livelier sense,
"To mine but little of their sweets dispense ;
"Books soon are painful to my failing sight,
"And oftener read from duty than delight ;
"(Yet let me own, that I can sometimes find
"Both joy and duty in the act combined ;) 130
"But view me rightly, you will see no more
"Than a poor female, willing to be poor ;
"Happy indeed, but not in books nor flowers,
"Not in fair dreams, indulged in earlier hours,
"Of never-tasted joys—such visions shun,
"My youthful friend, nor scorn the farmer's son."

"Nay," said the damsel, nothing pleased to see
A friend's advice could like a father's be ;
"Bless'd in your cottage, you must surely smile
"At those who live in our detested style. 140
"To my Lucinda's sympathizing heart
"Could I my prospects and my griefs impart,
"She would console me ; but I dare not show
"Ills that would wound her tender soul to know :
"And I confess, it shocks my pride to tell
"The secrets of the prison where I dwell ;
"For that dear maiden would be shock'd to feel
"The secrets I should shudder to reveal ;
"When told her friend was by a parent ask'd,
"Fed you the swine ?"—Good heav'n ! how I am task'd ! 150

GEORGE CRABBE

"What! can you smile? Ah! smile not at the grief
"That woos your pity and demands relief."

"Trifles, my love; you take a false alarm;
"Think, I beseech you, better of the farm:
"Duties in every state demand your care,
"And light are those that will require it there:
"Fix on the youth a favouring eye, and these,
"To him pertaining, or as his, will please."

"What words," the lass replied, "offend my ear!
"Try you my patience? Can you be sincere? 160
"And am I told a willing hand to give
"To a rude farmer, and with rustic live?

"Far other fate was yours—some gentle youth
"Admired your beauty, and avow'd his truth;
"The power of love prevail'd, and freely both
"Gave the fond heart, and pledged the binding oath;
"And then the rivals' plot, the parent's power,
"And jealous fears, drew on the happy hour:
"Ah! let not memory lose the blissful view,
"But fairly show what love has done for you." 170

"Agreed, my daughter; what my heart has known
"Of love's strange power shall be with frankness shown:
"But let me warn you, that experience finds
"Few of the scenes that lively hope designs."—

"Mysterious all," said Nancy; "you, I know,
"Have suffer'd much; now deign the grief to show—
"I am your friend, and so prepare my heart
"In all your sorrows to receive a part."

The widow answer'd: "I had once, like you,
"Such thoughts of love; no dream is more untrue. 180
"You judge it fated and decreed to dwell
"In youthful hearts, which nothing can expel,
"A passion doom'd to reign, and irresistible. }
"The struggling mind, when once subdued, in vain []
"Rejects the fury or defies the pain;
"The strongest reason fails the flame t' allay,
"And resolution droops and faints away:
"Hence, when the destined lovers meet, they prove
"At once the force of this all-powerful love;
"Each from that period feels the mutual smart, 190

THE WIDOW'S TALE

“Nor seeks to cure it—heart is changed for heart ;
“Nor is there peace till they delighted stand,
“And, at the altar, hand is join’d to hand.
“Alas ! my child, there are who, dreaming so,
“Waste their fresh youth, and waking feel the wo ;
“There is no spirit sent the heart to move
“With such prevailing and alarming love ;
“Passion to reason will submit—or why
“Should wealthy maids the poorest swains deny ?
“Or how could classes and degrees create 200
“The slightest bar to such resistless fate ?
“Yet high and low, you see, forbear to mix ;
“No beggars’ eyes the heart of kings transfix ;
“And who but am’rous peers or nobles sigh
“When titled beauties pass triumphant by ?
“For reason wakes, proud wishes to reprove ;
“You cannot hope, and therefore dare not love :
“All would be safe, did we at first inquire—
“‘Does reason sanction what our hearts desire ?’
“But, quitting precept, let example show 210
“What joys from love uncheck’d by prudence flow.
“A youth my father in his office placed,
“Of humble fortune, but with sense and taste ;
“But he was thin and pale, had downcast looks ;
“He studied much, and pored upon his books :
“Confused he was when seen, and, when he saw
“Me or my sisters, would in haste withdraw ;
“And had this youth departed with the year,
“His loss had cost us neither sigh nor tear.
“But with my father still the youth remain’d, 220
“And more reward and kinder notice gain’d :
“He often, reading, to the garden stray’d,
“Where I by books or musing was delay’d ;
“This to discourse in summer evenings led,
“Of these same evenings, or of what we read.
“On such occasions we were much alone ;
“But, save the look, the manner, and the tone,
“(These might have meaning,) all that we discuss’d
“We could with pleasure to a parent trust.
“At length ’twas friendship—and my friend and I 230
107

GEORGE CRABBE

"Said we were happy, and began to sigh ;
 "My sisters first, and then my father, found
 "That we were wandering o'er enchanted ground ;
 "But he had troubles in his own affairs,
 "And would not bear addition to his cares.
 "With pity moved, yet angry, 'Child,' said he,
 "'Will you embrace contempt and beggary ?
 "'Can you endure to see each other cursed
 "'By want, of every human wo the worst ?
 "'Warring for ever with distress, in dread
 "'Either of begging or of wanting bread ;
 "'While poverty, with unrelenting force,
 "'Will your own offspring from your love divorce ;
 "'They, through your folly, must be doom'd to pine,
 "'And you deplore your passion, or resign ;
 "'For, if it die, what good will then remain ?
 "'And if it live, it doubles every pain.'"—

240

"But you were true," exclaim'd the lass, "and fled
 "The tyrant's power who fill'd your soul with dread ?"—
 "But," said the smiling friend, "he fill'd my mouth with
 bread ;

250[]

"And in what other place that bread to gain
 "We long consider'd, and we sought in vain.
 "This was my twentieth year—at thirty-five
 "Our hope was fainter, yet our love alive ;
 "So many years in anxious doubt had pass'd."—
 "Then," said the damsel, "you were bless'd at last ?"
 A smile again adorn'd the widow's face,
 But soon a starting tear usurp'd its place.—

"Slow pass'd the heavy years, and each had more
 "Pains and vexations than the years before.

260

"My father fail'd ; his family was rent,
 "And to new states his grieving daughters sent ;
 "Each to more thriving kindred found a way,
 "Guests without welcome—servants without pay ;
 "Our parting hour was grievous ; still I feel
 "The sad, sweet converse at our final meal :
 "Our father then reveal'd his former fears,
 "Cause of his sternness, and then join'd our tears ;
 "Kindly he strove our feelings to repress,

THE WIDOW'S TALE

“But died, and left us heirs to his distress. 270
“The rich, as humble friends, my sisters chose;
“I with a wealthy widow sought repose;
“Who with a chilling frown her friend received,
“Bade me rejoice, and wonder’d that I grieved:
“In vain my anxious lover tried his skill
“To rise in life, he was dependent still;
“We met in grief, nor can I paint the fears
“Of these unhappy, troubled, trying years:
“Our dying hopes and stronger fears between, 280
“We felt no season peaceful or serene;
“Our fleeting joys, like meteors in the night,
“Shone on our gloom with inauspicious light;
“And then domestic sorrows, till the mind,
“Worn with distresses, to despair inclined;
“Add too the ill that from the passion flows,
“When its contemptuous frown the world bestows—
“The peevish spirit caused by long delay,
“When being gloomy we condemn the gay,
“When, being wretched, we incline to hate
“And censure others in a happier state; 290
“Yet loving still, and still compell’d to move
“In the sad labyrinth of ling’ring love:
“While you, exempt from want, despair, alarm,
“May wed—oh! take the farmer and the farm.”
“Nay,” said the nymph, “joy smiled on you at last!”
“Smiled for a moment,” she replied, “and pass’d:
“My lover still the same dull means pursued,
“Assistant call’d, but kept in servitude;
“His spirits wearied in the prime of life,
“By fears and wishes in eternal strife; 300
“At length he urged impatient—‘Now consent;
“‘With thee united, fortune may relent.’
“I paused, consenting; but a friend arose,
“Pleased a fair view, though distant, to disclose;
“From the rough ocean we beheld a gleam
“Of joy, as transient as the joys we dream;
“By lying hopes deceived, my friend retired,
“And sail’d—was wounded—reach’d us—and expired!
“You shall behold his grave, and, when I die,

"There—but 'tis folly—I request to lie."

310

"Thus," said the lass, "to joy you bade adieu !

"But how a widow?—that cannot be true ;

"Or was it force, in some unhappy hour,

"That placed you, grieving, in a tyrant's power?"

"Force, my young friend, when forty years are fled,

"Is what a woman seldom has to dread ;

"She needs no brazen locks nor guarding walls,

"And seldom comes a lover, though she calls.

"Yet moved by fancy, one approved my face,

"Though time and tears had wrought it much disgrace.

320

"The man I married was sedate and meek,

"And spoke of love as men in earnest speak ;

"Poor as I was, he ceaseless sought, for years,

"A heart in sorrow and a face in tears ;

"That heart I gave not ; and 'twas long before

"I gave attention, and then nothing more ;

"But in my breast some grateful feeling rose

"For one whose love so sad a subject chose ;

"Till long delaying, fearing to repent,

"But grateful still, I gave a cold assent.

330

"Thus we were wed ; no fault had I to find,

"And he but one ; my heart could not be kind :

"Alas ! of every early hope bereft,

"There was no fondness in my bosom left ;

"So had I told him, but had told in vain,

"He lived but to indulge me and complain.

"His was this cottage, he inclosed this ground,

"And planted all these blooming shrubs around ;

"He to my room these curious trifles brought,

"And with assiduous love my pleasure sought ;

340

"He lived to please me, and I oftentimes strove

"Smiling, to thank his unrequited love ;

"'Teach me,' he cried, 'that pensive mind to ease,

"'For all my pleasure is the hope to please.'

"Serene, though heavy, were the days we spent,

"Yet kind each word, and gen'rous each intent ;

"But his dejection lessen'd every day,

"And to a placid kindness died away.

"In tranquil ease we pass'd our latter years,

THE WIDOW'S TALE

"By griefs untroubled, unassail'd by fears.

350

"Let not romantic views your bosom sway,

"Yield to your duties, and their call obey :

"Fly not a youth, frank, honest, and sincere ;

"Observe his merits, and his passion hear !

"'Tis true, no hero, but a farmer sues—

"Slow in his speech, but worthy in his views ;

"With him you cannot that affliction prove,

"That rends the bosom of the poor in love ;

"Health, comfort, competence, and cheerful days,

"Your friends' approval, and your father's praise,

360

"Will crown the deed, and you escape *their* fate

"Who plan so wildly, and are wise too late."

The damsel heard ; at first th' advice was strange,

Yet wrought a happy, nay, a speedy change.

"I have no care," she said, when next they met,

"But one may wonder he is silent yet ;

"He looks around him with his usual stare,

"And utters nothing—not that I shall care."

This pettish humour pleased th' experienced friend—

None need despair, whose silence can offend ;

370

"Should I," resumed the thoughtful lass, "consent

"To hear the man, the man may now repent.

"Think you my sighs shall call him from the plough,

"Or give one hint, that 'You may woo me now?'"

"Persist, my love," replied the friend, "and gain

"A parent's praise, *that* cannot be in vain."

The father saw the change, but not the cause,

And gave the alter'd maid his fond applause.

The coarser manners she in part removed,

In part endured, improving and improved ;

380

She spoke of household works, she rose betimes,

And said neglect and indolence were crimes ;

The various duties of their life she weigh'd,

And strict attention to her dairy paid ;

The names of servants now familiar grew,

And fair Lucinda's from her mind withdrew.

As prudent travellers for their ease assume

Their modes and language to whose lands they come :

So to the farmer this fair lass inclined,

Gave to the business of the farm her mind ; 390
To useful arts she turn'd her hand and eye ;
And by her manners told him—"You may try."

Th' observing lover more attention paid,
With growing pleasure, to the alter'd maid ;
He fear'd to lose her, and began to see
That a slim beauty might a helpmate be ;
'Twixt hope and fear he now the lass address'd,
And in his Sunday robe his love express'd.
She felt no chilling dread, no thrilling joy,
Nor was too quickly kind, too slowly coy ; 400
But still she lent an unreluctant ear
To all the rural business of the year ;
Till love's strong hopes endured no more delay,
And Harry ask'd, and Nancy named the day.

"A happy change ! my boy," the father cried :
"How lost your sister all her school-day pride ?"
The youth replied, "It is the widow's deed :
"The cure is perfect, and was wrought with speed."—
"And comes there, boy, this benefit of books,
"Of that smart dress, and of those dainty looks ? 410
"We must be kind—some offerings from the farm
"To the white cot will speak our feelings warm ;
"Will show that people, when they know the fact,
"Where they have judged severely, can retract.
"Oft have I smil'd, when I beheld her pass
"With cautious step, as if she hurt the grass ;
"Where if a snail's retreat she chanced to storm,
"She look'd as begging pardon of the worm ;
"And what, said I, still laughing at the view,
"Have these weak creatures in the world to do ? 420
"But some are made for action, some to speak ;
"And, while she looks so pitiful and meek,
"Her words are weighty, though her nerves are weak." []

Soon told the village-bells the rite was done,
That join'd the school-bred miss and farmer's son ;
Her former habits some slight scandal raised,
But real worth was soon perceived and praised ;
She, her neat taste imparted to the farm,
And he, th' improving skill and vigorous arm.

TALE VIII.

THE MOTHER.

What though you have beauty,
Must you be therefore proud and pitiless?
As You Like It, A& III. Scene 5.

I would not marry her, though she were endow'd with all that Adam
had left him before he transgress'd.
[*Much Ado about Nothing*, A& II. Scene 1.]

Wilt thou love such a woman? What! to make thee an instrument,
and play false strains upon thee!—Not to be endured.
As You Like It, [A& IV. Scene 3].

Your son,
As mad in folly, lack'd the sense to know
Her estimation [home].
All's Well that Ends Well, A& V. Scene 3.

He [lost] a wife
..... whose words all ears took captive,
Whose dear perfection, hearts that scorn'd to serve
Humbly call'd mistress.
Be this sweet Helen's knell.
All's Well that Ends Well, A& V. Scene 3.

TALE VIII.

THE MOTHER.

THERE was a worthy, but a simple pair,
Who nursed a daughter, fairest of the fair.
Sons they had lost, and she alone remain'd,
Heir to the kindness they had all obtain'd;
Heir to the fortune they design'd for all,
Nor had th' allotted portion then been small;
But now, by fate enrich'd with beauty rare,
They watch'd their treasure with peculiar care.
The fairest features they could early trace,
And, blind with love, saw merit in her face—
Saw virtue, wisdom, dignity, and grace;
And Dorothea, from her infant years,
Gain'd all her wishes from their pride or fears;
She wrote a billet, and a novel read,
And with her fame her vanity was fed;
Each word, each look, each action was a cause
For flattering wonder, and for fond applause;
She rode or danced, and ever glanced around,
Seeking for praise, and smiling when she found.
The yielding pair to her petitions gave
An humble friend to be a civil slave;
Who for a poor support herself resign'd
To the base toil of a dependent mind.
By nature cold, our heiress stoop'd to art,
To gain the credit of a tender heart;
Hence at her door must suppliant paupers stand,
To bless the bounty of her beauteous hand.

10 }
[]

20

THE MOTHER

And now, her education all complete,
She talk'd of virtuous love and union sweet;
She was indeed by no soft passion moved,
But wish'd, with all her soul, to be beloved. 30
Here on the favour'd beauty fortune smiled;
Her chosen husband was a man so mild,
So humbly temper'd, so intent to please,
It quite distress'd her to remain at ease,
Without a cause to sigh, without pretence to tease. }
She tried his patience in a thousand modes, }
And tired it not upon the roughest roads. }
Pleasure she sought, and, disappointed, sigh'd
For joys, she said, "to her alone denied;" 40
And she was "sure her parents, if alive,
"Would many comforts for their child contrive."
The gentle husband bade her name him one;—
"No—that," she answer'd, "should for her be done;
"How could she say what pleasures were around?
"But she was certain many might be found."—
"Would she some sea-port, Weymouth, Scarborough,
grace?"—
"He knew she hated every watering-place."—
"The town?"—"What! now 'twas empty, joyless, dull?"
—"In winter?"—"No; she liked it worse when full." 50
She talk'd of building—"Would she plan a room?"—
"No! she could live, as he desired, in gloom."—
"Call then our friends and neighbours?"—"He might call,
"And they might come and fill his ugly hall;
"A noisy vulgar set, he knew she scorn'd them all."— }
"Then, might their two dear girls the time employ,
"And their improvement yield a solid joy?"— }
"Solid indeed! and heavy—oh! the bliss
"Of teaching letters to a lisping Miss!"—
"My dear, my gentle Dorothea, say, 60
"Can I oblige you?"—"You may go away."
Twelve heavy years this patient soul sustain'd
This wasp's attacks, and then her praise obtain'd,
Graved on a marble tomb, where he at peace remain'd. }
Two daughters wept their loss: the one a child
With a plain face, strong sense, and temper mild,

GEORGE CRABBE

Who keenly felt the mother's angry taunt,
 "Thou art the image of thy pious aunt."
 Long time had Lucy wept her slighted face,
 And then began to smile at her disgrace. 70
 Her father's sister, who the world had seen
 Near sixty years when Lucy saw sixteen,
 Begg'd the plain girl: the gracious mother smiled,
 And freely gave her grieved but passive child;
 And with her elder-born, the [beauty-bless'd,]
 This parent rested, if such minds can rest.
 No miss her waxen babe could so admire,
 Nurse with such care, or with such pride attire;
 They were companions meet, with equal mind,
 Bless'd with one love, and to one point inclined: 80
 Beauty to keep, adorn, increase, and guard,
 Was their sole care, and had its full reward.
 In rising splendor with the one it reign'd,
 And in the other was by care sustain'd,
 The daughter's charms increased, the parent's yet
 remain'd.— }
 []

Leave we these ladies to their daily care,
 To see how meekness and discretion fare.
 A village maid, unvex'd by want or love,
 Could not with more delight than Lucy move;
 The village-lark, high mounted in the spring, 90
 Could not with purer joy than Lucy sing;
 Her cares all light, her pleasures all sincere,
 Her duty joy, and her companion dear;
 In tender friendship and in true respect
 Lived aunt and niece, no flattery, no neglect—
 They read, walk'd, visited—together pray'd,
 Together slept the matron and the maid.
 There was such goodness, such pure nature seen
 In Lucy's looks, a manner so serene;
 Such harmony in motion, speech, and air, 100
 That without fairness she was more than fair;
 Had more than beauty in each speaking grace,
 That lent their cloudless glory to the face;
 Where mild good sense in placid looks were shown,
 And felt in every bosom but her own.

THE MOTHER

The one presiding feature in her mind,
Was the pure meekness of a will resign'd ;
A tender spirit, freed from all pretence
Of wit, and pleased in mild benevolence ;
Bless'd in protecting fondness she reposed,
With every wish indulged though undisclosed ;
But love, like zephyr on the limpid lake,
Was now the bosom of the maid to shake,
And in that gentle mind a gentle strife to make.

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Among their chosen friends, a favour'd few,
The aunt and niece a youthful rector knew ;
Who, though a younger brother, might address
A younger sister, fearless of success.
His friends, a lofty race, their native pride
At first display'd, and their assent denied ;
But, pleased such virtues and such love to trace,
They own'd she would adorn the loftiest race.
The aunt, a mother's caution to supply,
Had watch'd the youthful priest with jealous eye ;
And, anxious for her charge, had view'd unseen
The cautious life that keeps the conscience clean.

120

In all she found him all she wish'd to find,
With slight exception of a lofty mind :
A certain manner that express'd desire,
To be received as brother to the 'squire.
Lucy's meek eye had beam'd with many a tear,
Lucy's soft heart had beat with many a fear,
Before he told (although his looks, she thought,
Had oft confess'd) that he her favour sought ;
But when he kneel'd, (she wish'd him not to kneel,)
And spoke the fears and hopes that lovers feel ;
When too the prudent aunt herself confess'd,
Her wishes on the gentle youth would rest ;
The maiden's eye with tender passion beam'd,
She dwelt with fondness on the life she schemed—
The household cares, the soft and lasting ties
Of love, with all his binding charities ;
Their village taught, consoled, assisted, fed,
Till the young zealot tears of pleasure shed.

130

140

But would her mother? Ah! she fear'd it wrong

117

GEORGE CRABBE

To have indulged these forward hopes so long ;
 Her mother loved, but was not used to grant
 Favours so freely as her gentle aunt.—
 Her gentle aunt, with smiles that angels wear,
 Dispell'd her Lucy's apprehensive tear :
 Her prudent foresight the request had made
 To one whom none could govern, few persuade ;
 She doubted much if one in earnest woo'd
 A girl with not a single charm endued ;
 The sister's nobler views she then declared,
 And what small sum for Lucy could be spared ;
 "If more than this the foolish priest requires,
 "Tell him," she wrote, "to check his vain desires."
 At length, with many a cold expression mix'd,
 With many a sneer on girls so fondly fix'd,
 There came a promise—should they not repent,
 But take with grateful minds the portion meant,
 And wait the sister's day—the mother might consent.

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And here, might pitying hope o'er truth prevail,
 Or love o'er fortune, we would end our tale :
 For who more bless'd than youthful pair removed
 From fear of want—by mutual friends approved—
 Short time to wait, and in that time to live
 With all the pleasures hope and fancy give ;
 Their equal passion raised on just esteem,
 When reason sanctions all that love can dream ?

170

Yes ! reason sanctions what stern fate denies :
 The early prospect in the glory dies,
 As the soft smiles on dying infants play
 In their mild features, and then pass away.

The beauty died, ere she could yield her hand
 In the high marriage by the mother plann'd :
 Who grieved indeed, but found a vast relief
 In a cold heart, that ever warr'd with grief.

Lucy was present when her sister died,
 Heiress to duties that she ill supplied :
 There were no mutual feelings, sister arts,
 No kindred taste, nor intercourse of hearts ;
 When in the mirror play'd the matron's smile,
 The maiden's thoughts were trav'ling all the while ;

180

THE MOTHER

And, when desired to speak, she sigh'd to find
 Her pause offended:—"Envy made her blind ;
 "Tasteless she was, nor had a claim in life
 "Above the station of a rector's wife ;
 "Yet as an heiress, she must shun disgrace,
 "Although no heiress to her mother's face :
 "It is your duty," said th' imperious dame,
 "(Advanced your fortune) to advance your name,
 "And with superior rank, superior offers claim.
 "Your sister's lover, when his sorrows die,
 "May look upon you, and for favour sigh ;
 "Nor can you offer a reluctant hand ;
 "His birth is noble, and his seat is grand."
 Alarm'd was Lucy, was in tears—"A fool !
 "Was she a child in love?—a miss at school ?
 "Doubts any mortal, if a change of state
 "Dissolves all claims and ties of earlier date ?"

190

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200

The rector doubted, for he came to mourn
 A sister dead, and with a wife return.
 Lucy with heart unchanged received the youth,
 True in herself, confiding in his truth ;
 But own'd her mother's change: the haughty dame
 Pour'd strong contempt upon the youthful flame ;
 She firmly vow'd her purpose to pursue,
 Judged her own cause, and bade the youth adieu !
 The lover begg'd, insisted, urged his pain ;
 His brother wrote to threaten and complain ;
 Her sister, reasoning, proved the promise made,
 Lucy, appealing to a parent, pray'd ;
 But all opposed th' event that she design'd,
 And all in vain—she never changed her mind ;
 But coldly answer'd in her wonted way,
 That she "would rule, and Lucy must obey."

210

With peevish fear, she saw her health decline,
 And cried, "Oh ! monstrous, for a man to pine ;
 "But if your foolish heart must yield to love,
 "Let him possess it whom I now approve ;
 "This is my pleasure."—Still the rector came
 With larger offers and with bolder claim ;
 But the stern lady would attend no more—

220

119

GEORGE CRABBE

She frown'd, and rudely pointed to the door ;
 Whate'er he wrote, he saw unread return'd,
 And he, indignant, the dishonour spurn'd ;
 Nay, fix'd suspicion where he might confide,
 And sacrificed his passion to his pride.

230

Lucy, meantime, though threaten'd and distress'd,
 Against her marriage made a strong protest.
 All was domestic war: the aunt rebell'd
 Against the sovereign will, and was expell'd ;
 And every power was tried and every art,
 To bend to falsehood one determin'd heart ;
 Assail'd, in patience it received the shock,
 Soft as the wave, unshaken as the rock ;
 But while th' unconquer'd soul endures the storm
 Of angry fate, it preys upon the form.

240

With conscious virtue she resisted still,
 And conscious love gave vigour to her will ;
 But Lucy's trial was at hand ; with joy
 The mother cried—"Behold your constant boy—
 "Thursday—was married—take the paper, sweet,
 "And read the conduct of your reverend cheat ;
 "See with what pomp of coaches, in what crowd
 "The creature married—of his falsehood proud !
 "False, did I say?—at least no whining fool ;
 "And thus will hopeless passions ever cool :
 "But shall his bride your single state reproach ?
 "No ! give him crowd for crowd, and coach for coach.
 "Oh ! you retire ; reflect then, gentle miss,
 "And gain some spirit in a cause like this."

250

Some spirit Lucy gain'd ; a steady soul,
 Defying all persuasion, all control :
 In vain reproach, derision, threats were tried ;
 The constant mind all outward force defied,
 By vengeance vainly urged, in vain assail'd by pride.
 Fix'd in her purpose, perfect in her part,
 She felt the courage of a wounded heart ;
 The world receded from her rising view,
 When Heaven approach'd as earthly things withdrew ;
 Not strange before, for in the days of love,
 Joy, hope, and pleasure, she had thoughts above ;

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260

THE MOTHER

Pious when most of worldly prospects fond,
When they best pleased her she could look beyond ;
Had the young priest a faithful lover died,
Something had been her bosom to divide ;
Now Heaven had all, for in her holiest views
She saw the matron whom she fear'd to lose ;
While from her parent the dejected maid
Forced the unpleasant thought, or thinking pray'd.

270

Surprised, the mother saw the languid frame,
And felt indignant, yet forbore to blame.
Once with a frown she cried, "And do you mean
"To die of love—the folly of fifteen?"
But as her anger met with no reply,
She let the gentle girl in quiet die ;
And to her sister wrote, impell'd by pain,
"Come quickly, Martha, or you come in vain."
Lucy meantime profess'd with joy sincere,
That nothing held, employ'd, engaged her here.—

280

"I am an humble actor, doom'd to play
"A part obscure, and then to glide away ;
"Incurious how the great or happy shine,
"Or who have parts obscure and sad as mine ;
"In its best prospect I but wish'd, for life,
"To be th' assiduous, gentle, useful wife ;
"That lost, with wearied mind, and spirit poor,
"I drop my efforts, and can act no more ;
"With growing joy I feel my spirits tend
"To that last scene where all my duties end."

290

Hope, ease, delight, the thoughts of dying gave,
Till Lucy spoke with fondness of the grave ;
She smiled with wasted form, but spirit firm,
And said, she left but little for the worm.
As toll'd the bell, "There's one," she said, "hath press'd
"Awhile before me to the bed of rest ;"
And she beside her with attention spread
The decorations of the maiden dead.

300

While quickly thus the mortal part declined,
The happiest visions fill'd the active mind ;
A soft, religious melancholy gain'd
Entire possession, and for ever reign'd ;

On holy writ her mind reposing dwelt,
 She saw the wonders, she the mercies felt;
 Till in a bless'd and glorious reverie,
 She seem'd the Saviour as on earth to see,
 And, fill'd with love divine, th' attending friend to be; 310 }
 Or she, who trembling, yet confiding, stole
 Near to the garment, touch'd it, and was whole;
 When, such th' intenseness of the working thought,
 On her it seem'd the very deed was wrought;
 She the glad patient's fear and rapture found,
 The holy transport, and the healing wound;
 This was so fix'd, so grafted in the heart,
 That she adopted, nay became, the part.

But one chief scene was present to her sight:
 Her Saviour resting in the tomb by night; 320
 Her fever rose, and still her wedded mind
 Was to that scene, that hallow'd cave, confined—
 Where in the shade of death the body laid,
 There watch'd the spirit of the wandering maid;
 Her looks were fix'd, entranced, illumed, serene,
 In the still glory of the midnight scene;
 There at her Saviour's feet, in visions bless'd,
 Th' enraptured maid a sacred joy possess'd;
 In patience waiting for the first-born ray
 Of that all-glorious and triumphant day. 330
 To this idea all her soul she gave,
 Her mind reposing by the sacred grave;
 Then sleep would seal the eye, the vision close,
 And steep the solemn thoughts in brief repose.

Then grew the soul serene, and all its powers,
 Again restored illumed the dying hours;
 But reason dwelt where fancy stray'd before,
 And the mind wander'd from its views no more;
 Till death approach'd, when every look express'd
 A sense of bliss, till every sense had rest. 340

The mother lives, and has enough to buy
 Th' attentive ear and the submissive eye
 Of abject natures—these are daily told,
 How triumph'd beauty in the days of old;
 How, by her window seated, crowds have cast

THE MOTHER

Admiring glances, wondering as they pass'd ;
How from her carriage as she stepp'd to pray,
Divided ranks would humbly make her way ;
And how each voice in the astonish'd throng
Pronounced her peerless as she moved along.

350

Her picture then the greedy dame displays ;
Touch'd by no shame, she now demands its praise ;
In her tall mirror then she shows a face,
Still coldly fair with unaffecting grace ;
These she compares : "It has the form," she cries,
"But wants the air, the spirit, and the eyes ;
"This, as a likeness, is correct and true,
"But there alone the living grace we view."
This said, th' applauding voice the dame required,
And, gazing, slowly from the glass retired.

360

TALE IX.

ARABELLA.

Thrice blessed they that master so their blood—

[.]

But earthly happier is the rose distill'd,
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

Midsummer Night's Dream, A& I. Scene 1.

I [something] do excuse the thing I hate,

For his advantage whom I dearly love.

Measure for Measure, A& II. Scene 4.

Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!

[*Much Ado about Nothing*, A& III. Scene 1.]

TALE IX.

ARABELLA.

OF a fair town, where Doctor Rack was guide,
His only daughter was the boast and pride;
Wise Arabella—yet not wise alone,
She like a bright and polish'd brilliant shone;
Her father own'd her for his prop and stay,
Able to guide, yet willing to obey;
Pleased with her learning while discourse could please,
And with her love in languor and disease.
To every mother were her virtues known,
And to their daughters as a pattern shown;
Who in her youth had all that age requires,
And, with her prudence, all that youth admires.
These odious praises made the damsels try
Not to obtain such merits, but deny;
For, whatsoever wise mammas might say,
To guide a daughter this was not the way;
From such applause disdain and anger rise,
And envy lives where emulation dies.
In all his strength contends the noble horse
With one who just precedes him on the course;
But when the rival flies too far before,
His spirit fails, and he attempts no more.

This reasoning maid, above her sex's dread,
Had dared to read, and dared to say she read;
Not the last novel, not the new-born play;
Not the mere trash and scandal of the day;
But (though her young companions felt the shock)

10

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GEORGE CRABBE

She studied Berkeley, Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke :
Her mind within the maze of history dwelt,
And of the moral muse the beauty felt ;
The merits of the Roman page she knew,
And could converse with Moore and Montagu :
Thus she became the wonder of the town,
From that she reap'd, to that she gave, renown ;
And strangers, coming, all were taught t' admire
The learned lady, and the lofty spire.

30

Thus fame in public fix'd the maid, where all
Might throw their darts, and see the idol fall ;
A hundred arrows came with vengeance keen,
From tongues envenom'd, and from arms unseen ;
A thousand eyes were fix'd upon the place,
That, if she fell, she might not fly disgrace.
But malice vainly throws the poison'd dart,
Unless our frailty shows the peccant part ;
And Arabella still preserved her name
Untouch'd, and shone with undisputed fame ;
Her very notice some respect would cause,
And her esteem was honour and applause.

40

Men she avoided—not in childish fear,
As if she thought some savage foe was near ;
Not as a prude, who hides that man should seek,
Or who by silence hints that they should speak ;
But with discretion all the sex she view'd,
Ere yet engaged, pursuing, or pursued ;
Ere love had made her to his vices blind,
Or hid the favourite's failings from her mind.

50

Thus was the picture of the man portray'd,
By merit destined for so rare a maid ;
At whose request she might exchange her state,
Or still be happy in a virgin's fate.

60

He must be one with manners like her own,
His life unquestion'd, his opinions known ;
His stainless virtue must all tests endure,
His honour spotless, and his bosom pure ;
She no allowance made for sex or times,
Of lax opinion—crimes were ever crimes ;
No wretch forsaken must his frailty curse,

ARABELLA

No spurious offspring drain his private purse :
He at all times his passions must command,
And yet possess—or be refused her hand.

70

All this without reserve the maiden told,
And some began to weigh the rector's gold ;
To ask what sum a prudent man might gain,
Who had such store of virtues to maintain ?

A Doctor Campbell, north of Tweed, came forth,
Declared his passion, and proclaim'd his worth ;
Not unapproved, for he had much to say
On every cause, and in a pleasant way ;
Not all his trust was in a pliant tongue,
His form was good, and ruddy he, and young.

80

But, though the Doctor was a man of parts,
He read not deeply male or female hearts ;
But judged that all whom he esteem'd as wise
Must think alike, though some assumed disguise ;
That every reasoning Bramin, Christian, Jew,
Of all religions took their liberal view ;
And of her own, no doubt, this learned maid
Denied the substance, and the forms obey'd ;
And thus persuaded, he his thoughts express'd
Of her opinions, and his own profess'd :

90

"All states demand this aid, the vulgar need
"Their priests and pray'rs, their sermons and their creed ;
"And those of stronger minds should never speak
"(In his opinion) what might hurt the weak.
"A man may smile, but still he should attend
"His hour at church, and be the church's friend,
"What there he thinks conceal, and what he hears com-
mend."

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Frank was the speech, but heard with high disdain,
Nor had the Doctor leave to speak again ;
A man who own'd, nay gloried in deceit,
"He might despise her, but he should not cheat."

100

Then Vicar Holmes appear'd ; he heard it said
That ancient men best pleased the prudent maid ;
And true it was her ancient friends she loved ;
Servants when old she favour'd and approved ;
Age in her pious parents she revered,

127

GEORGE CRABBE

And neighbours were by length of days endear'd ;
But, if her husband too must ancient be,
The good old Vicar found it was not he.

On Captain Bligh her mind in balance hung—
Though valiant, modest ; and reserved, though young :
Against these merits must defects be set—
Though poor, imprudent ; and though proud, in debt :
In vain the Captain close attention paid ;
She found him wanting, whom she fairly weigh'd.

110

Then came a youth, and all their friends agreed,
That Edward Huntly was the man indeed ;
Respectful duty he had paid awhile,
Then ask'd her hand, and had a gracious smile :
A lover now declared, he led the fair
To woods and fields, to visits and to pray'r ;
Then whisper'd softly—"Will you name the day ?"
She softly whisper'd—"If you love me, stay."—
"Oh ! try me not beyond my strength," he cried ;—
"Oh ! be not weak," the prudent maid replied ;
"But by some trial your affection prove—
"Respect and not impatience argues love ;
"And love no more is by impatience known,
"Than Ocean's depth is by its tempests shown.
"He whom a weak and fond impatience sways,
"But for himself with all his fervour prays,
"And not the maid he woos, but his own will obeys ;
"And will she love the being who prefers,
"With so much ardour, his desire to hers ?"

120

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Young Edward grieved, but let not grief be seen ;
He knew obedience pleased his fancy's queen :
Awhile he waited, and then cried—"Behold !
"The year advancing, be no longer cold !"
For she had promised—"Let the flowers appear,
"And I will pass with thee the smiling year."
Then pressing grew the youth ; the more he press'd,
The less inclined the maid to his request :
"Let June arrive."—Alas ! when April came,
It brought a stranger, and the stranger, shame ;
Nor could the lover from his house persuade
A stubborn lass whom he had mournful made ;

140

ARABELLA

Angry and weak, by thoughtless vengeance moved,
She told her story to the fair beloved;
In strongest words th' unwelcome truth was shown,
To blight his prospects, careless of her own.

150

Our heroine grieved, but had too firm a heart
For him to soften, when she swore to part;
In vain his seeming penitence and pray'r,
His vows, his tears: she left him in despair.
His mother fondly laid her grief aside,
And to the reason of the nymph applied—

"It well becomes thee, lady, to appear,
"But not to be, in very truth, severe;
"Although the crime be odious in thy sight,
"That daring sex is taught such things to slight:
"His heart is thine, although it once was frail;
"Think of his grief, and let his love prevail!"

160

"Plead thou no more," the lofty lass return'd;
"Forgiving woman is deceived and spurn'd.
"Say that the crime is common—shall I take
"A common man my wedded lord to make?
"See! a weak woman by his arts betray'd,
"An infant born his father to upbraid;
"Shall I forgive his vileness, take his name,
"Sanction his error, and partake his shame?
"No! this assent would kindred frailty prove,
"A love for him would be a vicious love:
"Can a chaste maiden secret counsel hold
"With one whose crime by every mouth is told?
"Forbid it spirit, prudence, virtuous pride;
"He must despise me, were he not denied.
"The way from vice the erring mind to win
"Is with presuming sinners to begin,
"And show, by scorning them, a just contempt for sin."

170

The youth, repulsed, to one more mild convey'd
His heart, and smiled on the remorseless maid;
The maid, remorseless in her pride, the while
Despised the insult, and return'd the smile.

180

First to admire, to praise her, and defend,
Was (now in years advanced) a virgin friend:
Much she preferr'd, she cried, a single state,

"It was her choice"—it surely was her fate;
And much it pleased her in the train to view
A maiden vot'ress, wise and lovely too.

Time to the yielding mind his change imparts, 190
He varies notions, and he alters hearts;
'Tis right, 'tis just to feel contempt for vice,
But he that shows it may be over-nice:
There are who feel, when young, the false sublime,
And proudly love to show disdain for crime;
To whom the future will new thoughts supply,
The pride will soften, and the scorn will die;
Nay, where they still the vice itself condemn,
They bear the vicious, and consort with them.
Young Captain Grove, when one had changed his side, 200
Despised the venal turn-coat, and defied;
Old Colonel Grove now shakes him by the hand,
Though he who bribes may still his vote command.
Why would not Ellen to Belinda speak,
When she had flown to London for a week,
And then return'd, to every friend's surprise,
With twice the spirit, and with half the size?
She spoke not then—but, after years had flown,
A better friend had Ellen never known:
Was it the lady her mistake had seen? 210
Or had she also such a journey been?
No: 'twas the gradual change in human hearts,
That time, in commerce with the world, imparts;
That on the roughest temper throws disguise,
And steals from virtue her asperities.
The young and ardent, who with glowing zeal
Felt wrath for trifles, and were proud to feel,
Now find those trifles all the mind engage,
To soothe dull hours, and cheat the cares of age;
As young Zelinda, in her quaker-dress, 220
Disdain'd each varying fashion's vile excess,
And now her friends on old Zelinda gaze,
Pleased in rich silks and orient gems to blaze.
Changes like these 'tis folly to condemn,
So virtue yields not, nor is changed with them.

Let us proceed:—Twelve brilliant years were past,

ARABELLA

Yet each with less of glory than the last ;
Whether these years to this fair virgin gave
A softer mind—effect they often have ;
Whether the virgin-state was not so bless'd
As that good maiden in her zeal profess'd ;
Or whether lovers falling from her train,
Gave greater price to those she could retain,
Is all unknown ;—but Arabella now
Was kindly listening to a merchant's vow ;
Who offer'd terms so fair, against his love
To strive was folly ; so she never strove.—

Man in his earlier days we often find
With a too easy and unguarded mind ;
But, by increasing years and prudence taught,
He grows reserved, and locks up every thought.
Not thus the maiden, for in blooming youth
She hides her thought, and guards the tender truth ;
This, when no longer young, no more she hides,
But frankly in the favour'd swain confides.
Man, stubborn man, is like the growing tree,
That longer standing, still will harder be ;
And like its fruit the virgin, first austere,
Then kindly softening with the ripening year.

Now was the lover urgent, and the kind
And yielding lady to his suit inclined :
“A little time, my friend, is just, is right ;
“We must be decent in our neighbours' sight :”
Still she allow'd him of his hopes to speak,
And in compassion took off week by week ;
Till few remain'd, when, wearied with delay,
She kindly meant to take off day by day.

That female friend who gave our virgin praise
For flying man and all his treacherous ways,
Now heard with mingled anger, shame and fear,
Of one accepted, and a wedding near ;
But she resolved again with friendly zeal
To make the maid her scorn of wedlock feel ;
For she was grieved to find her work undone,
And like a sister mourn'd the failing nun.

Why are these gentle maidens prone to make

Their sister-doves the tempting world forsake?
 Why all their triumph when a maid disdains
 The tyrant-sex, and scorns to wear its chains?
 Is it pure joy to see a sister flown 270
 From the false pleasures they themselves have known?
 Or do they, as the call-birds in the cage,
 Try, in pure envy, others to engage;
 And therefore paint their native woods and groves,
 As scenes of dangerous joys and naughty loves?

Strong was the maiden's hope; her friend was proud,
 And had her notions to the world avow'd;
 And, could she find the Merchant weak and frail,
 With power to prove it, then she must prevail;
 For she aloud would publish his disgrace, 280
 And save his victim from a man so base.

When all inquiries had been duly made,
 Came the kind friend her burthen to unlade:—
 "Alas! my dear! not all our care and art
 "Can tread the maze of man's deceitful heart:
 "Look not surprise—nor let resentment swell
 "Those lovely features, all will yet be well;
 "And thou, from love's and man's deceptions free,
 "Wilt dwell in virgin-state, and walk to heav'n with me."
 The maiden frown'd, and then conceived "that wives 290
 "Could walk as well, and lead as holy lives
 "As angry prudes who scorn'd the marriage-chain,
 "Or luckless maids who sought it still in vain."

The friend was vex'd—she paused, at length she cried:
 "Know your own danger, then your lot decide;
 "That traitor Beswell, while he seeks your hand,
 "Has, I affirm, a wanton at command;
 "A slave, a creature from a foreign place,
 "The nurse and mother of a spurious race;
 "Brown, ugly bastards—(Heaven the word forgive, 300
 "And the deed punish!)—in his cottage live;
 "To town if business calls him, there he stays
 "In sinful pleasures wasting countless days;
 "Nor doubt the facts, for I can witness call
 "For every crime, and prove them one and all."

Here ceased th' informer; Arabella's look

ARABELLA

Was like a school-boy's puzzled by his book ;
Intent she cast her eyes upon the floor,
Paused—then replied—

“I wish to know no more :
“I question not your motive, zeal, or love,
“But must decline such dubious points to prove.— 310
“All is not true, I judge, for who can guess
“Those deeds of darkness men with care suppress ?
“He brought a slave perhaps to England's coast,
“And made her free ; it is our country's boast !
“And she perchance too grateful—good and ill
“Were sown at first, and grow together still ;
“The colour'd infants on the village-green,
“What are they more than we have often seen ?
“Children half-clothed who round their village stray, 320 }
“In sun or rain, now starved, now beaten, they
“Will the dark colour of their fate betray ; }
“Let us in Christian love for all account,
“And then behold to what such tales amount.”
“His heart is evil,” said th' impatient 'friend—
“My duty bids me try that heart to mend,”
Replied the virgin—“We may be too nice,
“And lose a soul in our contempt of vice ;
“If false the charge, I then shall show regard
“For a good man, and be his just reward ; 330
“And what for virtue can I better do
“Than to reclaim him, if the charge be true ?”
She spoke, nor more her holy work delay'd ;
’Twas time to lend an erring mortal aid :
“The noblest way,” she judged, “a soul to win,
“Was with an act of kindness to begin,
“To make the sinner sure, and then t' attack the sin¹.” }]

¹ As the author's purpose in this Tale may be mistaken, he wishes to observe, that conduct like that of the lady's here described must be meritorious or censurable just as the motives to it are pure or selfish ; that these motives may in a great measure be concealed from the mind of the agent ; and that we often take credit to our virtue for actions which spring originally from our tempers, inclinations, or our indifference. It cannot therefore be improper, much less immoral, to give an instance of such self-deception.

TALE X.

THE LOVER'S JOURNEY.

The sun is in the [heaven], and the proud day,
Attended with the pleasures of the world,
Is all too wanton.

King John, Act III. Scene 3.

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
Are of imagination all compact.

Midsummer Night's Dream, [Act V. Scene 2.]

Oh! how the spring of love resembleth
Th' uncertain glory of an April day,
Which now shows all her beauty to the sun,
And by and by a cloud bears all away.

And happily I have arrived at last
Unto the wished haven of my bliss.

Taming of the Shrew, Act V. Scene 1.

TALE X.

THE LOVER'S JOURNEY.

IT is the soul that sees; the outward eyes
Present the object, but the mind descries;
And thence delight, disgust, or cool indiff'rence rise :
When minds are joyful, then we look around,
And what is seen is all on fairy ground;
Again they sicken, and on every view
Cast their own dull and melancholy hue;
Or, if absorb'd by their peculiar cares,
The vacant eye on viewless matter glares,
Our feelings still upon our views attend,
And their own natures to the objects lend;
Sorrow and joy are in their influence sure,
Long as the passion reigns th' effects endure;
But love in minds his various changes makes,
And clothes each object with the change he takes;
His light and shade on every view he throws,
And on each object, what he feels, bestows.
Fair was the morning, and the month was June,
When rose a lover; love awakens soon;
Brief his repose, yet much he dreamt the while
Of that day's meeting, and his Laura's smile;
Fancy and love that name assign'd to her,
Call'd Susan in the parish-register;
And he no more was John—his Laura gave
The name Orlando to her faithful slave.
Bright shone the glory of the rising day,

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135

GEORGE CRABBE

When the fond traveller took his favourite way ;
He mounted gaily, felt his bosom light,
And all he saw was pleasing in his sight.

“Ye hours of expectation, quickly fly,
30 “And bring on hours of blest reality ;
“When I shall Laura see, beside her stand,
“Hear her sweet voice, and press her yielded hand.”

First o’er a barren heath beside the coast
Orlando rode, and joy began to boast.

“This neat low gorse,” said he, “with golden bloom,
“Delights each sense, is beauty, is perfume ;
“And this gay ling, with all its purple flowers,
“A man at leisure might admire for hours ;
40 “This green-fringed cup-moss has a scarlet tip,
“That yields to nothing but my Laura’s lip ;
“And then how fine this herbage ! men may say
“A heath is barren ; nothing is so gay :
“Barren or bare to call such charming scene
“Argues a mind possess’d by care and spleen.”

Onward he went, and fiercer grew the heat,
Dust rose in clouds before the horse’s feet ;
For now he pass’d through lanes of burning sand,
Bounds to thin crops or yet uncultured land ;
50 Where the dark poppy flourish’d on the dry
And sterile soil, and mock’d the thin-set rye.

“How lovely this !” the rapt Orlando said ;
“With what delight is labouring man repaid !
“The very lane has sweets that all admire,
“The rambling suckling and the vigorous brier ;
“See ! wholesome wormwood grows beside the way,
“Where dew-press’d yet the dog-rose bends the spray ;
“Fresh herbs the fields, fair shrubs the banks adorn,
“And snow-white bloom falls flaky from the thorn ;
60 “No fostering hand they need, no sheltering wall ;
“They spring uncultured and they bloom for all.”

The lover rode as hasty lovers ride,
And reach’d a common pasture wild and wide ;
Small black-legg’d sheep devour with hunger keen
The meagre herbage, fleshless, lank, and lean ;
Such o’er thy level turf, Newmarket ! stray,

THE LOVER'S JOURNEY

And there, with other *black-legs* find their prey.
He saw some scatter'd hovels; turf was piled
In square brown stacks; a prospect bleak and wild!
A mill, indeed, was in the centre found,
With short sear herbage withering all around;
A smith's black shed opposed a wright's long shop,
And join'd an inn where humble travellers stop.

70

"Ay, this is Nature," said the gentle 'squire;
"This ease, peace, pleasure—who would not admire?
"With what delight these sturdy children play,
"And joyful rustics at the close of day;
"Sport follows labour, on this even space
"Will soon commence the wrestling and the race;
"Then will the village-maidens leave their home,
"And to the dance with buoyant spirits come;
"No affectation in their looks is seen,
"Nor know they what disguise or flattery mean;
"Nor aught to move an envious pang they see—
"Easy their service, and their love is free;
"Hence early springs that love, it long endures,
"And life's first comfort, while they live, ensures.
"They the low roof and rustic comforts prize,
"Nor cast on prouder mansions envying eyes;
"Sometimes the news at yonder town they hear,
"And learn what busier mortals feel and fear;
"Secure themselves, although by tales amazed
"Of towns bombarded and of cities razed;
"As if they doubted, in their still retreat,
"The very news that makes their quiet sweet,
"And their days happy—happier only knows
"He on whom Laura her regard bestows."

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90

On rode Orlando, counting all the while
The miles he pass'd and every coming mile;
Like all attracted things, he quicker flies,
The place approaching where th' attraction lies;
When next appear'd a *dam*—so call the place—
Where lies a road confined in narrow space;
A work of labour, for on either side
Is level fen, a prospect wild and wide,
With dikes on either hand by ocean's self supplied.

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GEORGE CRABBE

Far on the right the distant sea is seen,
 And salt the springs that feed the marsh between;
 Beneath an ancient bridge, the straiten'd flood
 Rolls through its sloping banks of slimy mud; 110
 Near it a sunken boat resists the tide,
 That frets and hurries to th' opposing side;
 The rushes sharp, that on the borders grow,
 Bend their brown flow'rets to the stream below, }
 Impure in all its course, in all its progress slow: []
 Here a grave Flora¹ scarcely deigns to bloom,
 Nor wears a rosy blush, nor sheds perfume;
 The few dull flowers that o'er the place are spread
 Partake the nature of their fenny bed;
 Here on its wiry stem, in rigid bloom, 120
 Grows the salt lavender that lacks perfume;
 Here the dwarf sallows creep, the septfoil harsh,
 And the soft slimy mallow of the marsh;
 Low on the ear the distant billows sound,
 And just in view appears their stony bound;
 No hedge nor tree conceals the glowing sun,
 Birds, save a wat'ry tribe, the district shun, }
 Nor chirp among the reeds where bitter waters run. []
 "Various as beauteous, Nature, is thy face,"
 Exclaim'd Orlando: "all that grows has grace; 130
 "All are appropriate—bog, and marsh, and fen,

¹ The ditches of a fen so near the ocean are lined with irregular patches of a coarse and stained lava; a muddy sediment rests on the horse-tail and other perennial herbs, which in part conceal the shallowness of the stream; a fat-leaved pale-flowering scurvy-grass appears early in the year, and the razor-edged bull-rush in the summer and autumn. The fen itself has a dark and saline herbage; there are rushes and *arrow-head*, and in a few patches the flakes of the cotton-grass are seen, but more commonly the *sea-aster*, the duller of that numerous and hardy genus; a *thrift*, blue in flower, but withering and remaining withered till the winter scatters it; the *saltwort*, both simple and shrubby; a few kinds of grass changed by their soil and atmosphere, and low plants of two or three denominations undistinguished in a general view of the scenery;—such is the vegetation of the fen when it is at a small distance from the ocean; and in this case there arise from it effluvia strong and peculiar, half-saline, half-putrid, which would be considered by most people as offensive, and by some as dangerous; but there are others to whom singularity of taste or association of ideas has rendered it agreeable and pleasant.

THE LOVER'S JOURNEY

"Are only poor to undiscerning men ;
"Here may the nice and curious eye explore
"How Nature's hand adorns the rushy moor ;
"Here the rare moss in secret shade is found,
"Here the sweet myrtle of the shaking ground ;
"Beauties are these that from the view retire,
"But well repay th' attention they require ;
"For these my Laura will her home forsake,
"And all the pleasures they afford partake."

140

Again the country was enclosed, a wide
And sandy road has banks on either side ;
Where, lo ! a hollow on the left appear'd,
And there a gipsy-tribe their tent had rear'd ;
'Twas open spread, to catch the morning sun,
And they had now their early meal begun,
When two brown boys just left their grassy seat,
The early trav'ller with their pray'rs to greet.
While yet Orlando held his pence in hand,
He saw their sister on her duty stand ;
Some twelve years old, demure, affected, sly,
Prepared the force of early powers to try ;
Sudden a look of languor he descries,
And well-feign'd apprehension in her eyes ;
Train'd but yet savage, in her speaking face
He mark'd the features of her vagrant race ;
When a light laugh and roguish leer express'd
The vice implanted in her youthful breast.
Forth from the tent her elder brother came,
Who seem'd offended, yet forbore to blame
The young designer, but could only trace
The looks of pity in the trav'ller's face ;
Within, the father, who from fences nigh
Had brought the fuel for the fire's supply,
Watch'd now the feeble blaze, and stood dejected by ;
On ragged rug, just borrow'd from the bed,
And by the hand of coarse indulgence fed,
In dirty patchwork negligently dress'd,
Reclined the wife, an infant at her breast ;
In her wild face some touch of grace remain'd,
Of vigour palsied and of beauty stain'd ;

150

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170

139

GEORGE CRABBE

Her blood-shot eyes on her unheeding mate
 Were wrathful turn'd, and seem'd her wants to state,
 Cursing his tardy aid—her mother there
 With gipsy-state engross'd the only chair;
 Solemn and dull her look; with such she stands,
 And reads the milk-maid's fortune in her hands,
 Tracing the lines of life; assumed through years,
 Each feature now the steady falsehood wears;
 With hard and savage eye she views the food, 180
 And, grudging, pinches their intruding brood;
 Last in the group, the worn-out grandsire sits
 Neglected, lost, and living but by fits;
 Useless, despised, his worthless labours done,
 And half protected by the vicious son,
 Who half supports him; he with heavy glance
 Views the young ruffians who around him dance;
 And, by the sadness in his face, appears
 To trace the progress of their future years:
 Through what strange course of misery, vice, deceit, 190
 Must wildly wander each unpractised cheat!
 What shame and grief, what punishment and pain,
 Sport of fierce passions, must each child sustain—
 Ere they like him approach their latter end,
 Without a hope, a comfort, or a friend!

But this Orlando felt not; "Rogues," said he,
 "Doubtless they are, but merry rogues they be;
 "They wander round the land, and be it true,
 "They break the laws—then let the laws pursue
 "The wanton idlers; for the life they live, 200
 "Acquit I cannot, but I can forgive."
 This said, a portion from his purse was thrown,
 And every heart seem'd happy like his own.

He hurried forth, for now the town was nigh—
 "The happiest man of mortal men am I."
 Thou art! but change in every state is near,
 (So, while the wretched hope, the blest may fear);
 "Say, where is Laura!"—"That her words must show,"
 A lass replied; "read this, and thou shalt know!"
 "What, gone!"—Her friend insisted—forced to go— 210
 Is vex'd, was teased, could not refuse her!—"No?"—

THE LOVER'S JOURNEY

"But you can follow ;"—"Yes ;"—"The miles are few,

"The way is pleasant ; will you come ?—Adieu !

"Thy Laura !" "No ! I feel I must resign

"The pleasing hope ; thou hadst been here, if mine.

"A lady was it ?—Was no brother there ?

"But why should I afflict me if there were ?

"'The way is pleasant.'"—What to me the way ?

"I cannot reach her till the close of day.

"My dumb companion ! is it thus we speed ?

220

"Not I from grief nor thou from toil art freed ;

"Still art thou doom'd to travel and to pine,

"For my vexation—What a fate is mine !

"Gone to a friend, she tells me ; I commend

"Her purpose ; means she to a female friend ?

"By Heaven, I wish she suffer'd half the pain

"Of hope protracted through the day in vain :

"Shall I persist to see th' ungrateful maid ?

"Yes, I will see her, slight her, and upbraid.

"What ! in the very hour ? She knew the time,

230

"And doubtless chose it to increase her crime."

Forth rode Orlando by a river's side,

Inland and winding, smooth, and full and wide,

That roll'd majestic on, in one soft-flowing tide ;

The bottom gravel, flow'ry were the banks,

Tall willows, waving in their broken ranks ;

The road, now near, now distant, winding led

By lovely meadows which the waters fed ;

He pass'd the way-side inn, the village spire,

Nor stopp'd to gaze, to question, or admire ;

240

On either side the rural mansions stood,

With hedge-row trees, and hills high-crown'd with wood,

And many a devious stream that reach'd the nobler flood.

"I hate these scenes," Orlando angry cried,

"And these proud farmers ! yes, I hate their pride.

"See ! that sleek fellow, how he strides along,

"Strong as an ox, and ignorant as strong ;

"Can yon close crops a single eye detain

"But his who counts the profits of the grain ?

"And these vile beans with deleterious smell,

250

"Where is their beauty ? can a mortal tell ?

141

GEORGE CRABBE

"These deep fat meadows I detest; it shocks
 "One's feelings there to see the grazing ox—
 "For slaughter fatted, as a lady's smile
 "Rejoices man, and means his death the while.
 "Lo! now the sons of labour! every day
 "Employ'd in toil, and vex'd in every way;
 "Theirs is but mirth assumed, and they conceal,
 "In their affected joys, the ills they feel:
 "I hate these long green lanes; there's nothing seen 160
 "In this vile country but eternal green;
 "Woods! waters! meadows! Will they never end?
 "'Tis a vile prospect.—Gone to see a friend!"—

Still on he rode! a mansion fair and tall
 Rose on his view—the pride of Loddon-Hall:
 Spread o'er the park he saw the grazing steer,
 The full-fed steed, the herds of bounding deer;
 On a clear stream the vivid sunbeams play'd,
 Through noble elms, and on the surface made
 That moving picture, checker'd light and shade; 170 [}]
 Th' attended children, there indulged to stray,
 Enjoy'd and gave new beauty to the day;
 Whose happy parents from their room were seen
 Pleased with the sportive idlers on the green.

"Well!" said Orlando, "and for one so bless'd,
 "A thousand reasoning wretches are distress'd;
 "Nay, these so seeming glad, are grieving like the rest: [}]
 "Man is a cheat—and all but strive to hide
 "Their inward misery by their outward pride.
 "What do yon lofty gates and walls contain, 180
 "But fruitless means to soothe unconquer'd pain?
 "The parents read each infant daughter's smile,
 "Form'd to seduce, encouraged to beguile;
 "They view the boys unconscious of their fate,
 "Sure to be tempted, sure to take the bait;
 "These will be Lauras, sad Orlandos these—
 "There's guilt and grief in all one hears and sees."

Our trav'ller, lab'ring up a hill, look'd down
 Upon a lively, busy, pleasant town;
 All he beheld were there alert, alive, 190
 The busiest bees that ever stock'd a hive:

THE LOVER'S JOURNEY

A pair were married, and the bells aloud
Proclaim'd their joy, and joyful seem'd the crowd ;
And now proceeding on his way, he spied,
Bound by strong ties, the bridegroom and the bride ;
Each by some friends attended, near they drew,
And spleen beheld them with prophetic view.

"Married ! nay, mad !" Orlando cried in scorn ;

"Another wretch on this unlucky morn !

"What are this foolish mirth, these idle joys ?

300

"Attempts to stifle doubt and fear by noise :

"To me these robes, expressive of delight,

"Foreshow distress, and only grief excite ;

"And for these cheerful friends, will they behold

"Their wailing brood in sickness, want, and cold ;

"And his proud look, and her soft languid air

"Will—but I spare you—go, unhappy pair !"

And now approaching to the journey's end,

His anger fails, his thoughts to kindness tend,

He less offended feels, and rather fears t' offend :

310 }

Now gently rising, hope contends with doubt,

And casts a sunshine on the views without ;

And still reviving joy and lingering gloom

Alternate empire o'er his soul assume ;

Till, long perplex'd, he now began to find

The softer thoughts engross the settling mind.

He saw the mansion, and should quickly see

His Laura's self—and angry could he be ?

No ! the resentment melted all away——

"For this my grief a single smile will pay,"

320

Our trav'ller cried ;—"And why should it offend,

"That one so good should have a pressing friend ?

"Grieve not, my heart ! to find a favourite guest

"Thy pride and boast—ye selfish sorrows, rest ;

"She will be kind, and I again be blest."

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[]

While gentler passions thus his bosom sway'd,

He reach'd the mansion, and he saw the maid ;

"My Laura !"—"My Orlando !—this is kind ;

"In truth I came persuaded, not inclined.

"Our friends' amusement let us now pursue,

330

"And I to-morrow will return with you."

143

GEORGE CRABBE

Like man entranced, the happy lover stood—
 "As Laura wills, for she is kind and good ;
 "Ever the truest, gentlest, fairest, best—
 "As Laura wills, I see her and am blest."

Home went the lovers through that busy place,
 By Loddon-Hall, the country's pride and grace ;
 By the rich meadows where the oxen fed,
 Through the green vale that form'd the river's bed ;
 And by unnumber'd cottages and farms, 340
 That have for musing minds unnumber'd charms ;
 And how affected by the view of these
 Was then Orlando—did they pain or please ?

Nor pain nor pleasure could they yield—and why ?
 The mind was fill'd, was happy, and the eye
 Roved o'er the fleeting views, that but appear'd to die. []

Alone Orlando on the morrow paced
 The well-known road ; the [gipsy]-tent he traced ;
 The dam high-raised, the reedy dikes between,
 The scatter'd hovels on the barren green, 350
 The burning sand, the fields of thin-set rye,
 Mock'd by the useless Flora, blooming by ;
 And last the heath with all its various bloom,
 And the close lanes that led the trav'ller home.

Then could these scenes the former joys renew ?
 Or was there now dejection in the view ?—
 Nor one or other would they yield—and why ?
 The mind was absent, and the vacant eye
 Wander'd o'er viewless scenes, that but appear'd to die. []

TALE XI.

EDWARD SHORE.

Seem they grave or learned?
Why, so didst thou [.]
.] seem they religious?
Why, so didst thou; or are they spare in diet,
Free from gross passion or of mirth or anger,
Constant in spirit, not swerving with the blood,
Garnish'd and deck'd in modest compliment,
Not working with the eye without the ear,
And but [in] purged judgment trusting neither?
Such and so finely bolted didst thou seem.
Henry V. Act II. Scene 2.

Better I were distract:
So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs,
And woes by strong imagination lose
The knowledge of themselves.
Lear, Act IV. Scene 6.

TALE XI.

EDWARD SHORE.

GENIUS! thou gift of Heav'n! thou light divine!
Amid what dangers art thou doom'd to shine!
Oft will the body's weakness check thy force,
Oft damp thy vigour, and impede thy course;
And trembling nerves compel thee to restrain
Thy nobler efforts, to contend with pain;
Or Want (sad guest!) will in thy presence come,
And breathe around her melancholy gloom;
To life's low cares will thy proud thought confine,
And make her sufferings, her impatience, thine.

10

Evil and strong, seducing passions prey
On soaring minds, and win them from their way;
Who then to vice the subject spirits give,
And in the service of the conqu'ror live;
Like captive Samson making sport for all,
Who fear'd their strength, and glory in their fall.

Genius, with virtue, still may lack the aid
Implored by humble minds and hearts afraid;
May leave to timid souls the shield and sword
Of the tried faith, and the resistless word;
Amid a world of dangers venturing forth,
Frail, but yet fearless, proud in conscious worth,
Till strong temptation, in some fatal time,
Assails the heart, and wins the soul to crime;
When, left by honour, and by sorrow spent,
Unused to pray, unable to repent,
The nobler powers that once exalted high

20

EDWARD SHORE

Th' aspiring man, shall then degraded lie :
Reason, through anguish, shall her throne forsake,
And strength of mind but stronger madness make. 30

When EDWARD SHORE had reach'd his twentieth year,
He felt his bosom light, his conscience clear ;
Applause at school the youthful hero gain'd,
And trials there with manly strength sustain'd ;
With prospects bright upon the world he came,
Pure love of virtue, strong desire of fame ;
Men watch'd the way his lofty mind would take,
And all foretold the progress he would make.

Boast of these friends, to older men a guide,
Proud of his parts, but gracious in his pride ; 40
He bore a gay good-nature in his face,
And in his air were dignity and grace ;
Dress that became his state and years he wore,
And sense and spirit shone in Edward Shore.

Thus while admiring friends the youth beheld,
His own disgust their forward hopes repell'd ;
For he unfix'd, unfixing, look'd around,
And no employment but in seeking found ;
He gave his restless thoughts to views refined,
And shrank from worldly cares with wounded mind. 50

Rejecting trade, awhile he dwelt on laws,
"But who could plead, if unapproved the cause ?"
A doubting, dismal tribe physicians seem'd ;
Divines o'er texts and disputations dream'd ;
War and its glory he perhaps could love,
But there again he must the cause approve.

Our hero thought no deed should gain applause,
Where timid virtue found support in laws ;
He to all good would soar, would fly all sin,
By the pure prompting of the will within ; 60

"Who needs a law that binds him not to steal,"
Ask'd the young teacher, "can he rightly feel ?

"To curb the will, or arm in honour's cause,

"Or aid the weak—are these enforced by laws ?

• "Should we a foul, ungenerous action dread,

"Because a law condemns th' adulterous bed ?

"Or fly pollution, not for fear of stain,

GEORGE CRABBE

"But that some statute tells us to refrain?
"The grosser herd in ties like these we bind,
"In virtue's freedom moves th' enlighten'd mind." 70
"Man's heart deceives him," said a friend. "Of course,"

Replied the youth, "but, has it power to force?

"Unless it forces, call it as you will,

"It is but wish, and proneness to the ill."

"Art thou not tempted?" "Do I fall?" said Shore:

"The pure have fallen."—"Then are pure no more.

"While reason guides me, I shall walk aright,

"Nor need a steadier hand, or stronger light;

"Nor this in dread of awful threats, design'd

"For the weak spirit and the grov'ling mind, 80

"But that, engaged by thoughts and views sublime,

"I wage free war with grossness and with crime."

Thus look'd he proudly on the vulgar crew,
Whom statutes govern, and whom fears subdue.

Faith, with his virtue, he indeed profess'd,
But doubts deprived his ardent mind of rest;
Reason, his sovereign mistress, fail'd to show
Light through the mazes of the world below;

Questions arose, and they surpass'd the skill

Of his sole aid, and would be dubious still; 90

These to discuss he sought no common guide,

But to the doubters in his doubts applied;

When all together might in freedom speak,

And their loved truth with mutual ardour seek.

Alas! though men who feel their eyes decay

Take more than common pains to find their way,

Yet, when for this they ask each other's aid,

Their mutual purpose is the more delay'd:

Of all their doubts, their reasoning clear'd not one,

Still the same spots were present in the sun; 100

Still the same scruples haunted Edward's mind,

Who found no rest, nor took the means to find.

But though with shaken faith, and slave to fame,

Vain and aspiring on the world he came;

Yet was he studious, serious, moral, grave,

No passion's victim, and no system's slave;

Vice he opposed, indulgence he disdain'd,

EDWARD SHORE

And o'er each sense in conscious triumph reign'd.

Who often reads, will sometimes wish to write,
And Shore would yield instruction and delight:

110

A serious drama he design'd, but found
'Twas tedious travelling in that gloomy ground;

A deep and solemn story he would try,
But grew ashamed of ghosts, and laid it by;

Sermons he wrote, but they who knew his creed,
Or knew it not, were ill disposed to read;

And he would lastly be the nation's guide,

But, studying, fail'd to fix upon a side;

Fame he desired, and talents he possess'd,

But loved not labour, though he could not rest,

120

Nor firmly fix the vacillating mind,

That, ever working, could no centre find.

'Tis thus a sanguine reader loves to trace

The Nile forth rushing on his glorious race;

Calm and secure the fancied traveller goes

Through sterile deserts and by threat'ning foes;

He thinks not then of Afric's scorching sands,

Th' Arabian sea, the Abyssinian bands;

Fasils¹ and Michaels, and the robbers all,

Whom we politely chiefs and heroes call:

130

He of success alone delights to think,

He views that fount, he stands upon the brink,

And drinks a fancied draught, exulting so to drink.

[]

In his own room, and with his books around,

His lively mind its chief employment found;

Then idly busy, quietly employ'd,

And, lost to life, his visions were enjoy'd;

Yet still he took a keen inquiring view

Of all that crowds neglect, desire, pursue;

And thus abstracted, curious, still, serene,

140

He, unemploy'd, beheld life's shifting scene;

¹ Fasil was a rebel chief, and Michael the general of the royal army in Abyssinia, when Mr. Bruce visited that country. In all other respects their characters were nearly similar. They are both represented as cruel and treacherous; and even the apparently strong distinction of loyal and rebellious is in a great measure set aside, when we are informed that Fasil was an open enemy, and Michael an insolent and ambitious controller of the royal person and family.

GEORGE CRABBE

Still more averse from vulgar joys and cares,
Still more unfitted for the world's affairs.

There was a house where Edward oftentimes went,
And social hours in pleasant trifling spent;
He read, conversed and reason'd, sang and play'd,
And all were happy while the idler stay'd;
Too happy one, for thence arose the pain,
Till this engaging trifier came again.

But did he love? We answer, day by day, 150
The loving feet would take th' accustom'd way;
The amorous eye would rove as if in quest
Of something rare, and on the mansion rest;
The same soft passion touch'd the gentle tongue,
And Anna's charms in tender notes were sung;
The ear too seem'd to feel the common flame,
Sooth'd and delighted with the fair one's name;
And thus as love each other part possess'd,
The heart, no doubt, its sovereign power confess'd.

Pleased in her sight, the youth required no more; 160
Not rich himself, he saw the damsel poor;
And he too wisely, nay, too kindly loved,
To pain the being whom his soul approved.

A serious friend our cautious youth possess'd,
And at his table sat a welcome guest;
Both unemploy'd, it was their chief delight
To read what free and daring authors write;
Authors who loved from common views to soar,
And seek the fountains never traced before;
Truth they profess'd, yet often left the true 170
And beaten prospect, for the wild and new.
His chosen friend his fiftieth year had seen,
His fortune easy, and his air serene;
Deist and atheist call'd; for few agreed
What were his notions, principles, or creed;
His mind reposed not, for he hated rest,
But all things made a query or a jest;
Perplex'd himself, he ever sought to prove
That man is doom'd in endless doubt to rove;
Himself in darkness he profess'd to be, 180
And would maintain that not a man could see.

EDWARD SHORE

The youthful friend, dissentient, reason'd still
Of the soul's prowess, and the subject will ;
Of virtue's beauty, and of honour's force,
And a warm zeal gave life to his discourse ;
Since from his feelings all his fire arose,
And he had interest in the themes he chose.

The friend, indulging a sarcastic smile,
Said—"Dear enthusiast! thou wilt change thy style,
"When man's delusions, errors, crimes, deceit," 190
"No more distress thee, and no longer cheat."

Yet lo! this cautious man, so coolly wise,
On a young beauty fix'd unguarded eyes ;
And her he married. Edward at the view
Bade to his cheerful visits long adieu ;
But haply err'd, for this engaging bride
No mirth suppress'd, but rather cause supplied ;
And, when she saw the friends, by reasoning long,
Confused if right, and positive if wrong,
With playful speech and smile, that spoke delight, 200
She made them careless both of wrong and right.

This gentle damsel gave consent to wed,
With school and school-day dinners in her head :
She now was promised choice of daintiest food,
And costly dress, that made her sovereign good ;
With walks on hilly heath to banish spleen,
And summer-visits when the roads were clean.
All these she loved, to these she gave consent,
And she was married to her heart's content.

Their manner this—the friends together read, 210
Till books a cause for disputation bred ;
Debate then follow'd, and the vapour'd child
Declared they argued till her head was wild ;
And strange to her it was that mortal brain
Could seek the trial, or endure the pain.

Then, as the friend reposed, the younger pair
Sat down to cards, and play'd beside his chair ;
Till he, awaking, to his books applied,
Or heard the music of th' obedient bride.
If mild the evening, in the fields they stray'd, 220
And their own flock with partial eye survey'd ;

GEORGE CRABBE

But oft the husband, to indulgence prone,
Resumed his book, and bade them walk alone.

"Do, my kind Edward! I must take mine ease,
"Name the dear girl the planets and the trees;
"Tell her what warblers pour their evening song,
"What insects flutter, as you walk along;
"Teach her to fix the roving thoughts, to bind
"The wandering sense, and methodize the mind."

This was obey'd; and oft when this was done, 230
They calmly gazed on the declining sun;
In silence saw the glowing landscape fade,
Or, sitting, sang beneath the arbour's shade:
Till rose the moon, and on each youthful face
Shed a soft beauty, and a dangerous grace.

When the young wife beheld in long debate
The friends, all careless as she seeming sate;
It soon appear'd, there was in one combined
The nobler person and the richer mind:
He wore no wig, no grisly beard was seen, 240
And none beheld him careless or unclean;
Or watch'd him sleeping—we indeed have heard
Of sleeping beauty, and it has appear'd;
'Tis seen in infants; there indeed we find
The features soften'd by the slumbering mind—
But other beauties, when disposed to sleep,
Should from the eye of keen inspector keep:
The lovely nymph who would her swain surprise,
May close her mouth, but not conceal her eyes;
Sleep from the fairest face some beauty takes, 250
And all the homely features homelier makes;
So thought our wife, beholding with a sigh
Her sleeping spouse, and Edward smiling by.

A sick relation for the husband sent;
Without delay the friendly sceptic went;
Nor fear'd the youthful pair, for he had seen
The wife untroubled, and the friend serene;
No selfish purpose in his roving eyes,
No vile deception in her fond replies:
So judg'd the husband, and with judgment true, 260
For neither yet the guilt or danger knew.

EDWARD SHORE

What now remain'd? but they again should play
Th' accustom'd game, and walk th' accustom'd way;
With careless freedom should converse or read,
And the friend's absence neither fear nor heed.
But rather now they seem'd confused, constrain'd;
Within their room still restless they remain'd,
And painfully they felt, and knew each other pain'd.— }
Ah! foolish men! how could ye thus depend, []
One on himself, the other on his friend? 270

The youth with troubled eye the lady saw,
Yet felt too brave, too daring to withdraw;
While she, with tuneless hand the jarring keys
Touching, was not one moment at her ease.
Now would she walk, and call her friendly guide,
Now speak of rain, and cast her cloak aside;
Seize on a book, unconscious what she read,
And restless still, to new resources fled;
Then laugh'd aloud, then tried to look serene,
And ever changed, and every change was seen. 280

Painful it is to dwell on deeds of shame—
The trying day was past, another came;
The third was all remorse, confusion, dread,
And (all too late!) the fallen hero fled.

Then felt the youth, in that seducing time,
How feebly honour guards the heart from crime:
Small is his native strength; man needs the stay,
The strength imparted in the trying day;
For all that honour brings against the force
Of headlong passion, aids its rapid course; 290
Its slight resistance but provokes the fire,
As wood-work stops the flame, and then conveys it higher.

The husband came; a wife by guilt made bold
Had, meeting, sooth'd him, as in days of old;
But soon this fact transpired; her strong distress,
And his friend's absence, left him nought to guess.

Still cool, though grieved, thus prudence bade him write—
"I cannot pardon, and I will not fight;
"Thou art too poor a culprit for the laws,
"And I too faulty to support my cause. 300
"All must be punish'd; I must sigh alone,

GEORGE CRABBE

“At home thy victim for her guilt atone;
 “And thou, unhappy! virtuous now no more,
 “Must loss of fame, peace, purity deplore;
 “Sinners with praise will pierce thee to the heart,
 “And saints deriding, tell thee what thou art.”

Such was his fall; and Edward, from that time,
 Felt in full force the censure and the crime—
 Despised, ashamed; his noble views before,
 And his proud thoughts, degraded him the more. 310
 Should he repent—would that conceal his shame?
 Could peace be his? It perish'd with his fame.
 Himself he scorn'd, nor could his crime forgive;
 He fear'd to die, yet felt ashamed to live;
 Grieved, but not contrite was his heart—oppress'd,
 Not broken; not converted, but distress'd;
 He wanted will to bend the stubborn knee,
 He wanted light the cause of ill to see,
 To learn how frail is man, how humble then should be; }
 For faith he had not, or a faith too weak 320
 To gain the help that humbled sinners seek;
 Else had he pray'd—to an offended God
 His tears had flown a penitential flood;
 Though far astray, he would have heard the call
 Of mercy—“Come! return, thou prodigal;”
 Then, though confused, distress'd, ashamed, afraid,
 Still had the trembling penitent obey'd;
 Though faith had fainted, when assail'd by fear,
 Hope to the soul had whisper'd, “Persevere!”
 Till, in his Father's house an humbled guest, 330
 He would have found forgiveness, comfort, rest.

But all this joy was to our youth denied
 By his fierce passions and his daring pride;
 And shame and doubt impell'd him in a course,
 Once so abhorr'd, with unresisted force.
 Proud minds and guilty, whom their crimes oppress,
 Fly to new crimes for comfort and redress;
 So found our fallen youth a short relief
 In wine, the opiate guilt applies to grief—
 From fleeting mirth that o'er the bottle lives; 340
 From the false joy its inspiration gives;

EDWARD SHORE

And from associates, pleased to find a friend
With powers to lead them, gladden, and defend,
In all those scenes where transient ease is found
For minds whom sins oppress, and sorrows wound.

Wine is like anger; for it makes us strong,
Blind and impatient, and it leads us wrong;
The strength is quickly lost, we feel the error long.
Thus led, thus strengthen'd in an evil cause,
For folly pleading, sought the youth applause;
Sad for a time, then eloquently wild,

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350

He gaily spoke as his companions smiled;
Lightly he rose, and with his former grace
Proposed some doubt, and argued on the case;
Fate and fore-knowledge were his favourite themes—
How vain man's purpose, how absurd his schemes:

"Whatever is, was ere our birth decreed;
"We think our actions from ourselves proceed,
"And idly we lament th' inevitable deed;
"It seems our own, but there's a power above
"Directs the motion, nay, that makes us move;
"Nor good nor evil can you beings name,
"Who are but rooks and castles in the game;
"Superior natures with their puppets play,
"Till, bagg'd or buried, all are swept away."

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360

Such were the notions of a mind to ill
Now prone, but ardent and determined still.
Of joy now eager, as before of fame,
And screen'd by folly when assail'd by shame,
Deeply he sank; obey'd each passion's call,
And used his reason to defend them all.
Shall I proceed, and step by step relate
The odious progress of a sinner's fate?
No—let me rather hasten to the time
(Sure to arrive) when misery waits on crime.

370

With virtue, prudence fled; what Shore possess'd
Was sold, was spent, and he was now distress'd;
And Want, unwelcome stranger, pale and wan,
Met with her haggard looks the hurried man;
His pride felt keenly what he must expect
From useless pity and from cold neglect.

380

155

GEORGE CRABBE

Struck by new terrors, from his friends he fled,
 And wept his woes upon a restless bed ;
 Retiring late, at early hour to rise,
 With shrunken features, and with bloodshot eyes.
 If sleep one moment closed the dismal view,
 Fancy her terrors built upon the true ;
 And night and day had their alternate woes,
 That baffled pleasure, and that mock'd repose ;
 Till to despair and anguish was consign'd
 The wreck and ruin of a noble mind.

390

Now seized for debt, and lodged within a jail,
 He tried his friendships, and he found them fail ;
 Then fail'd his spirits, and his thoughts were all
 Fix'd on his sins, his sufferings, and his fall.
 His ruffled mind was pictured in his face,
 Once the fair seat of dignity and grace ;
 Great was the danger of a man so prone
 To think of madness, and to think alone ;
 Yet pride still lived, and struggled to sustain
 The drooping spirit and the roving brain ;
 But this too fail'd : a friend his freedom gave,
 And sent him help the threat'ning world to brave ;
 Gave solid counsel what to seek or flee,
 But still would stranger to his person be :
 In vain ! the truth determined to explore,
 He traced the friend whom he had wrong'd before.

400

This was too much ; both aided and advised
 By one who shunn'd him, pitied, and despised,
 He bore it not ; 'twas a deciding stroke,
 And on his reason like a torrent broke :
 In dreadful stillness he appear'd awhile,
 With vacant horror and a ghastly smile ;
 Then rose at once into the frantic rage,
 That force controll'd not, nor could love assuage.

410

Friends now appear'd, but in the man was seen
 The angry maniac, with vindictive mien ;
 Too late their pity gave to care and skill
 The hurried mind and ever-wandering will ;
 Unnoticed pass'd all time, and not a ray
 Of reason broke on his benighted way ;

420

EDWARD SHORE

But now he spurn'd the straw in pure disdain,
And now laugh'd loudly at the clinking chain.

Then, as its wrath subsided, by degrees
The mind sank slowly to infantine ease;
To playful folly, and to causeless joy,
Speech without aim, and without end, employ;
He drew fantastic figures on the wall,
And gave some wild relation of them all;
With brutal shape he join'd the human face,
And idiot smiles approved the motley race.

430

Harmless at length th' unhappy man was found,
The spirit settled, but the reason drown'd;
And all the dreadful tempest died away,
To the dull stillness of the misty day.

And now his freedom he attain'd—if free,
The lost to reason, truth, and hope, can be;
His friends, or wearied with the charge, or sure
The harmless wretch was now beyond a cure,
Gave him to wander where he pleased, and find
His own resources for the eager mind;
The playful children of the place he meets,
Playful with them he rambles through the streets;
In all they need, his stronger arm he lends,
And his lost mind to these approving friends.

440

That gentle maid, whom once the youth had loved,
Is now with mild religious pity moved;
Kindly she chides his boyish flights, while he
Will for a moment fix'd and pensive be;
And, as she trembling speaks, his lively eyes
Explore her looks, he listens to her sighs;
Charm'd by her voice, th' harmonious sounds invade
His clouded mind, and for a time persuade:
Like a pleased infant, who has newly caught
From the maternal glance a gleam of thought;
He stands enrapt, the half-known voice to hear,
And starts, half-conscious, at the falling tear.

450

Rarely from town, nor then unwatch'd, he goes,
In darker mood, as if to hide his woes;
Returning soon, he with impatience seeks
His youthful friends, and shouts, and sings, and speaks;

460

GEORGE CRABBE

Speaks a wild speech with action all as wild—
The children's leader, and himself a child ;
He spins their top, or, at their bidding, bends
His back, while o'er it leap his laughing friends ;
Simple and weak, he acts the boy once more,
And heedless children call him Silly Shore.

TALE XII.

'SQUIRE THOMAS;

OR,

THE PRECIPITATE CHOICE.

Such smiling rogues as these,
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords in twain,
Too intricate t' unloose——
Lear, A& II. Scene 2.

My other self, my counsel's consistory,
My oracle, my prophet, ...
I as a child will go by thy direction.
Richard III. A& II. Scene 2.

If I do not have pity [of] her, I'm a villain; if I do not love her,
I am a Jew.
Much Ado about Nothing, A& II. Scene 3.

Women are soft, mild, [pitiful and] flexible;
[Thou stern,] obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless.
3 Henry VI. A& I. Scene 4.

He must be told of it, and he shall; the office
Becomes a woman best; I'll take it upon me;
If I prove honey-mouth'd, let my tongue blister.
Winter's Tale, A& II. Scene 2.

Disguise—I see thou art a wickedness.
Twelfth Night, A& II. Scene 2.

TALE XII.

'SQUIRE THOMAS.

'SQUIRE THOMAS flatter'd long a wealthy aunt,
Who left him all that she could give or grant :
Ten years he tried, with all his craft and skill,
To fix the sovereign lady's varying will ;
Ten years enduring at her board to sit,
He meekly listen'd to her tales and wit ;
He took the meanest office man can take,
And his aunt's vices for her money's sake.
By many a threat'ning hint she waked his fear,
And he was pain'd to see a rival near ;
Yet all the taunts of her contemptuous pride
He bore, nor found his grov'ling spirit tried ;
Nay, when she wish'd his parents to traduce,
Fawning he smiled, and justice call'd th' abuse ;
"They taught you nothing ; are you not, at best,"
Said the proud dame, "a trifler, and a jest ?"
"Confess you are a fool !" — he bow'd, and he confess'd.]

10

This vex'd him much, but could not always last :
The dame is buried, and the trial past.

There was a female, who had courted long
Her cousin's gifts, and deeply felt the wrong ;
By a vain boy forbidden to attend
The private councils of her wealthy friend,
She vow'd revenge, nor should that crafty boy
In triumph undisturb'd his spoils enjoy ;
He heard, he smiled, and when the will was read,
Kindly dismiss'd the kindred of the dead ;

20

'SQUIRE THOMAS

"The dear deceased," he call'd her, and the crowd
Moved off with curses deep and threat'nings loud.

The youth retired, and, with a mind at ease, 30
Found he was rich, and fancied he must please.
He might have pleased, and to his comfort found
The wife he wish'd, if he had sought around ;

For there were lasses of his own degree,
With no more hatred to the state than he ;
But he had courted spleen and age so long,
His heart refused to woo the fair and young ;
So long attended on caprice and whim,
He thought attention now was due to him ;

And as his flattery pleased the wealthy dame, 40
Heir to the wealth he might the flattery claim ;
But this the fair with one accord denied,
Nor waved for man's caprice the sex's pride.

There is a season when to them is due
Worship and awe, and they will claim it too :
"Fathers," they cry, "long hold us in their chain,
"Nay, tyrant brothers claim a right to reign ;
"Uncles and guardians we in turn obey,
"And husbands rule with ever-during sway ;
"Short is the time when lovers at the feet 50
"Of beauty kneel, and own the slavery sweet ;
"And shall we this our triumph, this the aim
"And boast of female power, forbear to claim ?
"No ! we demand that homage, that respect,
"Or the proud rebel punish and reject."

Our hero, still too indolent, too nice
To pay for beauty the accustom'd price,
No less forbore t' address the humbler maid,
Who might have yielded with the price unpaid ;
But lived, himself to humour and to please, 60
To count his money, and enjoy his ease.

It pleased a neighbouring 'squire to recommend
A faithful youth, as servant to his friend ;
Nay, more than servant, whom he praised for parts
Ductile yet strong, and for the best of hearts ;
One who might ease him in his small affairs,
With tenants, tradesmen, taxes, and repairs ;

Answer his letters, look to all his dues,
And entertain him with discourse and news.

The 'squire believed, and found the trusted youth 70
A very pattern for his care and truth ;
Not for his virtues to be praised alone,
But for a modest mien and humble tone ;
Assenting always, but as if he meant
Only to strength of reasons to assent :
For was he stubborn, and retain'd his doubt,
Till the more subtle 'squire had forced it out ;
Nay, still was right, but he perceived that strong
And powerful minds could make the right the wrong.

When the 'squire's thoughts on some fair damsel dwelt, 80
The faithful friend his apprehensions felt ;
It would rejoice his faithful heart to find
A lady suited to his master's mind ;
But who deserved that master ? who would prove
That hers was pure, uninterested love ?
Although a servant, he would scorn to take
A countess, till she suffer'd for his sake ;
Some tender spirit, humble, faithful, true,
Such, my dear master ! must be sought for you.

Six months had pass'd, and not a lady seen, 90
With just this love, 'twixt fifty and fifteen ;
All seem'd his doctrine or his pride to shun,
All would be woo'd, before they would be won ;
When the chance naming of a race and fair
Our 'squire disposed to take his pleasure there.
The friend profess'd, "although he first began
"To hint the thing, it seem'd a thoughtless plan :
"The roads, he fear'd, were foul, the days were short,
"The village far, and yet there might be sport."

"What ! you of roads and starless nights afraid ? 100
"You think to govern ! you to be obey'd !"
Smiling he spoke ; the humble friend declared
His soul's obedience, and to go prepared.

The place was distant, but with great delight
They saw a race, and hail'd the glorious sight :
The 'squire exulted, and declared the ride
Had amply paid, and he was satisfied.

'SQUIRE THOMAS

They gazed, they feasted, and, in happy mood,
Homeward return'd, and hastening as they rode ;
For short the day, and sudden was the change 110
From light to darkness, and the way was strange ;
Our hero soon grew peevish, then distress'd ;
He dreaded darkness, and he sigh'd for rest :
Going, they pass'd a village ; but, alas !
Returning saw no village to repass ;

The 'squire remember'd too a noble hall,
Large as a church, and whiter than its wall :
This he had noticed as they rode along,
And justly reason'd that their road was wrong.
George, full of awe, was modest in reply— 120

"The fault was his, 'twas folly to deny ;
"And of his master's safety were he sure,
"There was no grievance he would not endure."
This made his peace with the relenting 'squire,
Whose thoughts yet dwelt on supper and a fire ;
When, as they reach'd a long and pleasant green,
Dwellings of men, and next a man, were seen.

"My friend," said George, "to travellers astray
"Point out an inn, and guide us on the way."
The man look'd up ; "Surprising ! can it be 130
"My master's son ? as I'm alive, 'tis he."

"How ! Robin," George replied, "and are we near
"My father's house ? how strangely things appear !—
"Dear sir, though wanderers, we at last are right :
"Let us proceed, and glad my father's sight ;
"We shall at least be fairly lodged and fed,
"I can ensure a supper and a bed ;
"Let us this night, as one of pleasure date,
"And of surprise : it is an act of fate."
"Go on," the 'squire in happy temper cried ; 140
"I like such blunder ! I approve such guide."

They ride, they halt ; the farmer comes in haste ;
Then tells his wife how much their house is graced ;
They bless the chance, they praise the lucky son,
That caused the error.—Nay ! it was not one,
But their good fortune—Cheerful grew the 'squire,
Who found dependants, flattery, wine, and fire ;

GEORGE CRABBE

He heard the jack turn round; the busy dame
Produced her damask; and with supper came
The daughter, dress'd with care, and full of maiden-
shame.

150 []

Surprised, our hero saw the air and dress,
And strove his admiration to express;
Nay! felt it too—for Harriot was, in truth,
A tall fair beauty in the bloom of youth;
And, from the pleasure and surprise, a grace
Adorn'd the blooming damsel's form and face;
Then too, such high respect and duty paid
By all—such silent reverence in the maid;
Vent'ring with caution, yet with haste, a glance;
Loth to retire, yet trembling to advance,
Appear'd the nymph, and in her gentle guest
Stirr'd soft emotions till the hour of rest.
Sweet was his sleep, and in the morn again
He felt a mixture of delight and pain:

160

"How fair, how gentle," said the 'squire, "how meek,
"And yet how sprightly, when disposed to speak!
"Nature has bless'd her form, and Heaven her mind,
"But in her favours Fortune is unkind;
"Poor is the maid—nay, poor she cannot prove
"Who is enrich'd with beauty, worth, and love."

170

The 'squire arose, with no precise intent
To go or stay—uncertain what he meant.
He moved to part—they begg'd him first to dine;
And who could then escape from love and wine?
As came the night, more charming grew the fair,
And seem'd to watch him with a two-fold care:
On the third morn, resolving not to stay,
Though urged by love, he bravely rode away.

Arrived at home, three pensive days he gave
To feelings fond and meditations grave;
Lovely she was, and, if he did not err,
As fond of him as his fond heart of her;
Still he delay'd, unable to decide
Which was the master-passion, love or pride:
He sometimes wonder'd how his friend could make,
And then exulted in, the night's mistake;

180

'SQUIRE THOMAS

Had she but fortune, "doubtless then," he cried,
"Some happier man had won the wealthy bride."

While thus he hung in balance, now inclined
To change his state, and then to change his mind— 190
That careless George dropp'd idly on the ground
A letter, which his crafty master found ;
The stupid youth confess'd his fault, and pray'd
The generous 'squire to spare a gentle maid ;
Of whom her tender mother, full of fears,
Had written much—"She caught her oft in tears,
"For ever thinking on a youth above
"Her humble fortune—still she own'd not love ;
"Nor can define, dear girl ! the cherish'd pain,
"But would rejoice to see the cause again. 200
"That neighbouring youth, whom she endured before,
"She now rejects, and will behold no more ;
"Raised by her passion, she no longer stoops
"To her own equals, but she pines and droops :
"Like to a lily, on whose sweets the sun
"Has withering gazed—she saw and was undone.
"His wealth allured her not—nor was she moved
"By his superior state, himself she loved :
"So mild, so good, so gracious, so genteel—
"But spare your sister, and her love conceal ; 210
"We must the fault forgive, since she the pain must
feel."

"Fault !" said the 'squire, "there's coarseness in the mind
"That thus conceives of feelings so refined ;
"Here end my doubts, nor blame yourself, my friend,
"Fate made you careless—here my doubts have end."

The way is plain before us—there is now
The lover's visit first, and then the vow
Mutual and fond, the marriage-rite, the bride
Brought to her home with all a husband's pride ;
The 'squire receives the prize his merits won, 220
And the glad parents leave the patron-son.

But in short time he saw with much surprise,
First gloom, then grief, and then resentment rise,
From proud, commanding frowns and anger-darting eyes :
"Is there in Harriot's humble mind this fire, 230

GEORGE CRABBE

"This fierce impatience?" ask'd the puzzled 'squire:
 "Has marriage changed her? or the mask she wore
 "Has she thrown by, and is herself once more?"

Hour after hour, when clouds on clouds appear,
 Dark and more dark, we know the tempest near; 230
 And thus the frowning brow, the restless form,
 And threat'ning glance, forerun domestic storm:
 So read the husband, and, with troubled mind,
 Reveal'd his fears—"My love, I hope you find

"All here is pleasant—but I must confess
 "You seem offended, or in some distress;
 "Explain the grief you feel, and leave me to redress." } []

"Leave it to you?" replied the nymph—"indeed!
 "What—to the cause from whence the ills proceed?
 "Good Heaven! to take me from a place, where I 240

Had every comfort underneath the sky;
 And then immure me in a gloomy place,
 "With the grim monsters of your ugly race,
 "That from their canvas staring, make me dread
 "Through the dark chambers where they hang to tread!

"No friend nor neighbour comes to give that joy,
 "Which all things here must banish or destroy:
 "Where is the promised coach? the pleasant ride?
 "Oh! what a fortune has a farmer's bride!
 "Your sordid pride has placed me just above 250

"Your hired domestics—and what pays me? love!
 "A selfish fondness I endure each hour,
 "And share unwitness'd pomp, unenvied power;

"I hear your folly, smile at your parade,
 "And see your favourite dishes duly made;
 "Then am I richly dress'd for you t' admire,
 "Such is my duty and my lord's desire;
 "Is this a life for youth, for health, for joy?
 "Are these my duties—this my base employ?

"No! to my father's house will I repair, 160
 "And make your father idle wealth support me there;
 "Was it your wish to have an humble bride
 "For bondage thankful? Curse upon your pride!
 "Was it a slave you wanted? You shall see,
 "That, if not happy, I at least am free;

'SQUIRE THOMAS

"Well, sir, your answer!"—silent stood the 'squire,
 As looks a miser at his house on fire;
 Where all he deems is vanish'd in that flame,
 Swept from the earth his substance and his name:
 So, lost to every promised joy of life, 270
 Our 'squire stood gaping at his angry wife;—
 His fate, his ruin, where he saw it vain
 To hope for peace, pray, threaten, or complain;
 And thus, betwixt his wonder at the ill
 And his despair—there stood he gaping still.

"Your answer, sir—shall I depart a spot
 "I thus detest?"—"Oh, miserable lot!"
 Exclaim'd the man; "Go, serpent! nor remain
 "To sharpen wo by insult and disdain:
 "A nest of harpies was I doom'd to meet; 280
 "What plots, what combinations of deceit!
 "I see it now—all plann'd, design'd, contrived;
 "Served by that villain—by this fury wived—
 "What fate is mine! What wisdom, virtue, truth,
 "Can stand, if dæmons set their traps for youth?
 "He lose his way! vile dog! he cannot lose
 "The way a villain through his life pursues;
 "And thou, deceiver! thou, afraid to move,
 "And hiding close the serpent in the dove!
 "I saw—but, fated to endure disgrace, 290
 "Unheeding saw, the fury in thy face;
 "And call'd it spirit—Oh! I might have found
 "Fraud and imposture—all the kindred round!
 "A nest of vipers"————

"Sir, I'll not admit
 "These wild effusions of your angry wit:
 "Have you that value, that we all should use
 "Such mighty arts for such important views?
 "Are you such prize—and is my state so fair,
 "That they should sell their souls to get me there?
 "Think you that we alone our thoughts disguise? 300
 "When in pursuit of some contended prize,
 "Mask we alone the heart, and soothe whom we despise? []
 "Speak you of craft and subtle schemes, who know
 "That all your wealth you to deception owe;

GEORGE CRABBE

"Who play'd for ten dull years a scoundrel-part,
"To worm yourself into a widow's heart ?
"Now, when you guarded, with superior skill,
"That lady's closet, and preserved her will,
"Blind in your craft, you saw not one of those
"Opposed by you might you in turn oppose ; 310
"Or watch your motions, and by art obtain
"Share of that wealth you gave your peace to gain ?
"Did conscience never"—

"Cease, Tormentor, cease—

"Or reach me poison—let me rest in peace !"
"Agreed—but hear me—let the truth appear"—
"Then state your purpose—I'll be calm and hear"—
"Know then, this wealth, sole object of your care,
"I had some right, without your hand, to share ;
"My mother's claim was just—but soon she saw
"Your power, compell'd, insulted, to withdraw : 320
"'Twas then my father, in his anger, swore
"You should divide the fortune, or restore ;
"Long we debated—and you find me now
"Heroic victim to a father's vow ;
"Like Jephtha's daughter, but in different state,
"And both decreed to mourn our early fate ;
"Hence was my brother servant to your pride,
"Vengeance made him your slave—and me your bride.
"Now all is known—a dreadful price I pay
"For our revenge—but still we have our day ; 330
"All that you love you must with others share,
"Or all you dread from their resentment dare !
"Yet terms I offer—let contention cease :
"Divide the spoil, and let us part in peace."

Our hero trembling heard—he sat—he rose—
Nor could his motions nor his mind compose ;
He paced the room—and, stalking to her side,
Gazed on the face of his undaunted bride ;
And nothing there but scorn and calm aversion spied. }
He would have vengeance, yet he fear'd the law : }
Her friends would threaten, and their power he saw ; } 340
"Then let her go ;"—but oh ! a mighty sum
Would that demand, since he had let her come ;

'SQUIRE THOMAS

Nor from his sorrows could he find redress,
Save that which led him to a like distress,
And all his ease was in his wife to see
A wretch as anxious and distress'd as he.
Her strongest wish, the fortune to divide
And part in peace, his avarice denied ;
And thus it happen'd, as in all deceit,
The cheater found the evil of the cheat ;
The husband grieved—nor was the wife at rest ;
Him she could vex, and he could her molest ;
She could his passion into frenzy raise,
But, when the fire was kindled, fear'd the blaze :
As much they studied, so in time they found
The easiest way to give the deepest wound ;
But then, like fencers, they were equal still,
Both lost in danger what they gain'd in skill ;
Each heart a keener kind of rancour gain'd,
And paining more, was more severely pain'd ;
And thus by both were equal vengeance dealt,
And both the anguish they inflicted felt.

350

360

TALE XIII.

JESSE AND COLIN.

Then she plots, then she ruminates, then she devises ; and what they think in their hearts they may effect, they will break their hearts but they will effect.

Merry Wives of Windsor, A& II. Scene 2.

She hath spoken that she should not, I am sure of that ; Heaven knows what she hath known.

Macbeth, A& V. Scene 1.

Our house is hell, and thou a merry devil.

Merchant of Venice, A& II. Scene 3.

And yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit of too much, as they that starve with nothing ; it is no mean happiness, therefore, to be seated in the mean.

Merchant of Venice, A& I. Scene 2.

TALE XIII.

JESSE AND COLIN.

A VICAR died, and left his daughter poor—
It hurt her not, she was not rich before :
Her humble share of worldly goods she sold,
Paid every debt, and then her fortune told ;
And found, with youth and beauty, hope and health,
Two hundred guineas was her worldly wealth ;
It then remain'd to choose her path in life,
And first, said Jesse, "Shall I be a wife?—
"Colin is mild and civil, kind and just,
"I know his love, his temper I can trust ; 10
"But small his farm, it asks perpetual care,
"And we must toil as well as trouble share.
"True, he was taught in all the gentle arts
"That raise the soul, and soften human hearts,
"And boasts a parent, who deserves to shine
"In higher class, and I could wish her mine ;
"Nor wants he will his station to improve,
"A just ambition waked by faithful love ;—
"Still is he poor—and here my father's friend
"Deigns for his daughter, as her own, to send ; 20
"A worthy lady, who it seems has known
"A world of griefs and troubles of her own.
"I was an infant, when she came, a guest
"Beneath my father's humble roof to rest ;
"Her kindred all unfeeling, vast her woes ;
"Such her complaint, and there she found repose ;
"Enrich'd by fortune, now she nobly lives,

GEORGE CRABBE

"And nobly, from the blest abundance, gives ;
 "The grief, the want of human life, she knows,
 "And comfort there and here relief bestows ; 30
 "But are they not dependants ?—Foolish pride !
 "Am I not honour'd by such friend and guide ?
 "Have I a home," (here Jesse dropp'd a tear,)
 "Or friend beside ?"—A faithful friend was near.

Now Colin came, at length resolved to lay
 His heart before her and to urge her stay ;
 True, his own plough the gentle Colin drove,
 An humble farmer with aspiring love ;
 Who, urged by passion, never dared till now,
 Thus urged by fears, his trembling hopes avow. 40
 Her father's glebe he managed ; every year
 The grateful vicar held the youth more dear ;
 He saw indeed the prize in Colin's view,
 And wish'd his Jesse with a man so true ;
 Timid as true, he urged with anxious air
 His tender hope, and made the trembling prayer ;
 When Jesse saw, nor could with coldness see,
 Such fond respect, such tried sincerity,
 Grateful for favours to her father dealt,
 She more than grateful for his passion felt ; 50
 Nor could she frown on one so good and kind,
 Yet fear'd to smile, and was unfix'd in mind ;
 But prudence placed the female friend in view—
 What might not one so rich and grateful do ?
 So lately, too, the good old vicar died,
 His faithful daughter must not cast aside
 The signs of filial grief, and be a ready bride :
 Thus, led by prudence, to the lady's seat
 The village-beauty purposed to retreat ;
 But, as in hard-fought fields the victor knows 60
 What to the vanquish'd he, in honour, owes,
 So, in this conquest over powerful love,
 Prudence resolved a generous foe to prove ;
 And Jesse felt a mingled fear and pain
 In her dismissal of a faithful swain,
 Gave her kind thanks, and when she saw his wo,
 Kindly betray'd that she was loth to go.

JESSE AND COLIN

"But would she promise, if abroad she met
 "A frowning world, she would remember yet
 "Where dwelt a friend?"—"That could she not forget." }
 And thus they parted; but each faithful heart
 Felt the compulsion, and refused to part. 71

Now by the morning mail the timid maid
 Was to that kind and wealthy dame convey'd;
 Whose invitation, when her father died,
 Jesse as comfort to her heart applied.
 She knew the days her generous friend had seen—
 As wife and widow, evil days had been;
 She married early, and for half her life
 Was an insulted and forsaken wife; 80
 Widow'd and poor, her angry father gave,
 Mix'd with reproach, the pittance of a slave;
 Forgetful brothers pass'd her, but she knew
 Her humbler friends, and to their home withdrew;
 The good old vicar to her sire applied
 For help, and help'd her when her sire denied;
 When in few years death stalk'd through bower and hall,
 Sires, sons, and sons of sons, were buried all;
 She then abounded, and had wealth to spare
 For softening grief she once was doom'd to share; 90
 Thus train'd in misery's school, and taught to feel,
 She would rejoice an orphan's woes to heal.
 So Jesse thought, who look'd within her breast,
 And thence conceived how bounteous minds are bless'd.

From her vast mansion look'd the lady down
 On humbler buildings of a busy town;
 Thence came her friends of either sex, and all
 With whom she lived on terms reciprocal.
 They pass'd the hours with their accustom'd ease,
 As guests inclined, but not compell'd to please; 100
 But there were others in the mansion found,
 For office chosen, and by duties bound;
 Three female rivals, each of power possess'd,
 Th' attendant-maid, poor friend, and kindred-guest.

To these came Jesse, as a seaman thrown
 By the rude storm upon a coast unknown:
 The view was flattering, civil seem'd the race,

GEORGE CRABBE

But all unknown the dangers of the place.

Few hours had pass'd, when, from attendants freed,

The lady utter'd—"This is kind indeed ;

110

"Believe me, love ! that I for one like you

"Have daily pray'd, a friend discreet and true ;

"Oh ! wonder not that I on you depend,

"You are mine own hereditary friend :

"Hearken, my Jesse, never can I trust

"Beings ungrateful, selfish, and unjust ;

"But you are present, and my load of care

"Your love will serve to lighten and to share.

"Come near me, Jesse—let not those below

"Of my reliance on your friendship know ;

120

"Look as they look, be in their freedoms free—

"But all they say do you convey to me."

Here Jesse's thoughts to Colin's cottage flew,
And with such speed she scarce their absence knew.

"Jane loves her mistress, and should she depart,

"I lose her service, and she breaks her heart ;

"My ways and wishes, looks and thoughts she knows,

"And duteous care by close attention shows ;

"But is she faithful ? in temptation strong ?

"Will she not wrong me ? ah ! I fear the wrong.

130

"Your father loved me ; now, in time of need,

"Watch for my good, and to his place succeed.

"Blood doesn't bind—that girl, who every day

"Eats of my bread, would wish my life away ;

"I am her *dear relation*, and she thinks

"To make her fortune, an ambitious minx !

"She only courts me for the prospect's sake,

"Because she knows I have a will to make ;

"Yes, love ! my will delay'd, I know not how—

"But you are here, and I will make it now.

140

"That idle creature, keep her in your view,

"See what she does, what she desires to do ;

"On her young mind may artful villains prey,

"And to my plate and jewels find a way ;

"A pleasant humour has the girl ; her smile

"And cheerful manner tedious hours beguile ;

"But well observe her, ever near her be,

JESSE AND COLIN

"Close in your thoughts, in your professions free.

"Again, my Jesse, hear what I advise,

"And watch a woman ever in disguise;

150

"Issop, that widow, serious, subtle, sly—

"But what of this?—I must have company.

"She markets for me, and although she makes

"Profit, no doubt, of all she undertakes,

"Yet she is one I can to all produce,

"And all her talents are in daily use;

"Deprived of her, I may another find

"As sly and selfish, with a weaker mind:

"But never trust her, she is full of art,

"And worms herself into the closest heart;

160

"Seem then, I pray you, careless in her sight,

"Nor let her know, my love, how we unite.

"Do, my good Jesse, cast a view around,

"And let no wrong within my house be found;

"That girl associates with—I know not who

"Are her companions, nor what ill they do;

"'Tis then the widow plans, 'tis then she tries

"Her various arts and schemes for fresh supplies;

"'Tis then, if ever, Jane her duty quits,

"And, whom I know not, favours and admits:

170

"Oh! watch their movements all; for me 'tis hard,

"Indeed is vain, but you may keep a guard;

"And I, when none your watchful glance deceive,

"May make my will, and think what I shall leave."

Jesse, with fear, disgust, alarm, surprise,

Heard of these duties for her ears and eyes;

Heard by what service she must gain her bread,

And went with scorn and sorrow to her bed.

Jane was a servant fitted for her place,

Experienced, cunning, fraudulent, selfish, base;

180

Skill'd in those mean, humiliating arts

That make their way to proud and selfish hearts;

By instinct taught, she felt an awe, a fear,

For Jesse's upright, simple character;

Whom with gross flattery she awhile assail'd,

And then beheld with hatred when it fail'd;

Yet, trying still upon her mind for hold,

175

She all the secrets of the mansion told ;
 And to invite an equal trust she drew
 Of every mind a bold and rapid view ; 190
 But on the widow'd friend with deep disdain,
 And rancorous envy, dwelt the treacherous Jane.—
 In vain such arts ; without deceit or pride,
 With a just taste and feeling for her guide,
 From all contagion Jesse kept apart,
 Free in her manners, guarded in her heart.

Jesse one morn was thoughtful, and her sigh
 The widow heard as she was passing by ;
 And—"Well !" she said, "is that some distant swain,
 "Or aught with us, that gives your bosom pain ? 200
 "Come, we are fellow-sufferers, slaves in thrall,
 "And tasks and griefs are common to us all ;
 "Think not my frankness strange : they love to paint
 "Their state with freedom, who endure restraint ;
 "And there is something in that speaking eye
 "And sober mien, that prove I may rely.
 "You came a stranger ; to my words attend,
 "Accept my offer, and you find a friend ;
 "It is a labyrinth in which you stray,
 "Come, hold my clue, and I will lead the way. 210

"Good Heav'n ! that one so jealous, envious, base,
 "Should be the mistress of so sweet a place ;
 "She, who so long herself was low and poor,
 "Now broods suspicious on her useless store ;
 "She loves to see us abject, loves to deal
 "Her insult round, and then pretends to feel ;
 "Prepare to cast all dignity aside,
 "For know your talents will be quickly tried ;
 "Nor think, from favours past, a friend to gain,
 "'Tis but by duties we our posts maintain : 220
 "I read her novels, gossip through the town,
 "And daily go, for idle stories, down ;
 "I cheapen all she buys, and bear the curse
 "Of honest tradesmen for my niggard-purse ;
 "And, when for her this meanness I display,
 "She cries, 'I heed not what I throw away ;'
 "Of secret bargains I endure the shame,

JESSE AND COLIN

"And stake my credit for our fish and game ;
"Oft has she smiled to hear, 'her generous soul
"Would gladly give, but stoops to my control' ; 230
"Nay ! I have heard her, when she chanced to come
"Where I contended for a petty sum,
"Affirm 'twas painful to behold such care,
"But Issop's nature is to pinch and spare : '
"Thus all the meanness of the house is mine,
"And my reward—to scorn her, and to dine.

"See next that giddy thing, with neither pride
"To keep her safe, nor principle to guide :
"Poor, idle, simple flirt ! as sure as fate
"Her maiden-fame will have an early date. 240
"Of her beware ; for all who live below
"Have faults they wish not all the world to know ;
"And she is fond of listening, full of doubt,
"And stoops to guilt to find an error out.

"And now once more observe the artful maid,
"A lying, prying, jilting, thievish jade ;
"I think, my love, you would not condescend
"To call a low, illiterate girl your friend ;
"But in our troubles we are apt, you know,
"To lean on all who some compassion show ; 250
"And she has flexile features, acting eyes,
"And seems with every look to sympathise ;
"No mirror can a mortal's grief express
"With more precision, or can feel it less ;
"That proud, mean spirit, she by fawning courts,
"By vulgar flattery, and by vile reports ;
"And by that proof she every instant gives
"To one so mean, that yet a meaner lives.—

"Come, I have drawn the curtain, and you see
"Your fellow-actors, all our company ; 260
"Should you incline to throw reserve aside,
"And in my judgment and my love confide,
"I could some prospects open to your view,
"That ask attention—and, till then, adieu."

"Farewell !" said Jesse, hastening to her room,
Where all she saw within, without, was gloom :
Confused, perplex'd, she pass'd a dreary hour,

Before her reason could exert its power ;
 To her all seem'd mysterious, all allied
 To avarice, meanness, folly, craft, and pride ; 270
 Wearied with thought, she breathed the garden's air,
 Then came the laughing lass, and join'd her there.
 "My sweetest friend has dwelt with us a week,
 "And does she love us ? be sincere and speak ;
 "My aunt you cannot—Lord ! how I should hate
 "To be like her, all misery and state ;
 "Proud, and yet envious, she disgusted sees
 "All who are happy, and who look at ease.
 "Let friendship bind us, I will quickly show
 "Some favourites near us you'll be bless'd to know ; 280
 "My aunt forbids it—but, can she expect,
 "To soothe her spleen, we shall ourselves neglect ?
 "Jane and the widow were to watch and stay
 "My free-born feet ; I watch'd as well as they ;
 "Lo ! what is this ? this simple key explores
 "The dark recess that holds the spinster's stores ;
 "And led by her ill star, I chanced to see
 "Where Issop keeps her stock of ratafie ;
 "Used in the hours of anger and alarm,
 "It makes her civil, and it keeps her warm ; 290
 "Thus bless'd with secrets, both would choose to hide,
 "Their fears now grant me what their scorn denied.
 "My freedom thus by their assent secured,
 "Bad as it is, the place may be endured ;
 "And bad it is, but her estates, you know,
 "And her beloved hoards, she must bestow ;
 "So we can slyly our amusements take,
 "And friends of dæmons, if they help us, make."
 "Strange creatures these," thought Jesse, half inclined
 To smile at one malicious and yet kind ; 300
 Frank and yet cunning, with a heart to love
 And malice prompt—the serpent and the dove ;
 Here could she dwell ? or could she yet depart ?
 Could she be artful ? could she bear with art ?—
 This splendid mansion gave the cottage grace,
 She thought a dungeon was a happier place ;
 And Colin pleading, when he pleaded best,

JESSE AND COLIN

Wrought not such sudden change in Jesse's breast.

The wondering maiden, who had only read
Of such vile beings, saw them now with dread; 310
Safe in themselves—for nature has design'd
The creature's poison harmless to the kind;
But all beside who in the haunts are found
Must dread the poison, and must feel the wound.

Days full of care, slow weary weeks pass'd on;
Eager to go, still Jesse was not gone;
Her time in trifling or in tears she spent,
She never gave, she never felt content:
The lady wonder'd that her humble guest
Strove not to please, would neither lie nor jest; 320
She sought no news, no scandal would convey,
But walk'd for health, and was at church to pray;
All this displeased, and soon the widow cried:

"Let me be frank—I am not satisfied;
"You know my wishes, I your judgment trust;
"You can be useful, Jesse, and you must;
"Let me be plainer, child—I want an ear,
"When I am deaf, instead of mine to hear;
"When mine is sleeping, let your eye awake;
"When I observe not, observation take; 330
"Alas! I rest not on my pillow laid,
"Then threat'ning whispers make my soul afraid;
"The tread of strangers to my ear ascends,
"Fed at my cost, the minions of my friends;
"While you, without a care, a wish to please,
"Eat the vile bread of idleness and ease."

Th' indignant girl astonish'd answer'd—"Nay!
"This instant, madam, let me haste away;
"Thus speaks my father's, thus an orphan's, friend?
"This instant, lady, let your bounty end." 340

The lady frown'd indignant—"What!" she cried,
"A vicar's daughter with a princess' pride!
"And pauper's lot! but pitying I forgive;
"How, simple Jesse, do you think to live?
"Have I not power to help you, foolish maid?
"To my concerns be your attention paid;
"With cheerful mind th' allotted duties take,

"And recollect I have a will to make."

Jesse, who felt as liberal natures feel,
When thus the baser their designs reveal,
Replied—"Those duties were to her unfit,
"Nor would her spirit to her tasks submit."

350

In silent scorn the lady sate awhile,
And then replied with stern contemptuous smile—

"Think you, fair madam, that you came to share
"Fortunes like mine without a thought or care?

"A guest, indeed! from every trouble free,
"Dress'd by my help, with not a care for me.

"When I a visit to your father made,

"I for the poor assistance largely paid;

360

"To his domestics I their tasks assign'd;

"I fix'd the portion for his hungry hind;

"And had your father (simple man!) obey'd

"My good advice, and watch'd as well as pray'd,

"He might have left you something with his prayers,

"And lent some colour for these lofty airs.—

"In tears! my love! Oh, then my soften'd heart

"Cannot resist—we never more will part;

"I need your friendship—I will be your friend;

"And thus determin'd, to my will attend."

370

Jesse went forth, but with determin'd soul
To fly such love, to break from such control;

"I hear enough," the trembling damsel cried;

"Flight be my care, and Providence my guide:

"Ere yet a prisoner, I escape will make;

"Will, thus display'd, th' insidious arts forsake,

"And, as the rattle sounds, will fly the fatal snake."

}
[]

Jesse her thanks upon the morrow paid,

Prepared to go, determin'd though afraid.

"Ungrateful creature," said the lady, "this

380

"Could I imagine?—are you frantic, miss?

"What! leave your friend, your prospects—is it true?"

This Jesse answer'd by a mild "Adieu!"

The dame replied, "Then houseless may you rove,

"The starving victim to a guilty love;

"Branded with shame, in sickness doom'd to nurse

"An ill-form'd cub, your scandal and your curse;

JESSE AND COLIN

"Spurn'd by its scoundrel father, and ill fed
 "By surly rustics with the parish-bread!—
 "Relent you not?—speak—yet I can forgive;
 "Still live with me"—"With you," said Jesse, "live?" 390
 "No! I would first endure what you describe,
 "Rather than breathe with your detested tribe:
 "Who long have feign'd, till now their very hearts
 "Are firmly fix'd in their accursed parts;
 "Who all profess esteem, and feel disdain,
 "And all, with justice, of deceit complain;
 "Whom I could pity, but that, while I stay,
 "My terror drives all kinder thoughts away;
 "Grateful for this, that when I think of you,
 "I little fear what poverty can do." 400

The angry matron her attendant Jane
 Summon'd in haste to soothe the fierce disdain.

"A vile detested wretch!" the lady cried,
 "Yet shall she be, by many an effort, tried,
 "And, clogg'd with debt and fear, against her will abide; }
 "And, once secured, she never shall depart []
 "Till I have proved the firmness of her heart;
 "Then when she dares not, would not, cannot go,
 "I'll make her feel what 'tis to use me so." 410

The pensive Colin in his garden stray'd,
 But felt not then the beauties it display'd;
 There many a pleasant object met his view,
 A rising wood of oaks behind it grew;
 A stream ran by it, and the village-green
 And public road were from the gardens seen;
 Save where the pine and larch the bound'ry made,
 And on the rose-beds threw a softening shade.

The mother sat beside the garden-door,
 Dress'd as in times ere she and hers were poor; 420
 The broad-laced cap was known in ancient days,
 When madam's dress compell'd the village praise;
 And still she look'd as in the times of old,
 Ere his last farm the erring husband sold;
 While yet the mansion stood in decent state,
 And paupers waited at the well-known gate.

"Alas! my son!" the mother cried, "and why

GEORGE CRABBE

"That silent grief and oft-repeated sigh?
 "True, we are poor, but thou hast never felt
 "Pangs to thy father for his error dealt; 430
 "Pangs from strong hopes of visionary gain,
 "For ever raised, and ever found in vain.
 "He rose unhappy! from his fruitless schemes,
 "As guilty wretches from their blissful dreams;
 "But thou wert then, my son, a playful child,
 "Wondering at grief, gay, innocent, and wild;
 "Listening at times to thy poor mother's sighs,
 "With curious looks and innocent surprise;
 "Thy father dying, thou, my virtuous boy,
 "My comfort always, waked my soul to joy; 440
 "With the poor remnant of our fortune left,
 "Thou hast our station of its gloom bereft:
 "Thy lively temper, and thy cheerful air,
 "Have cast a smile on sadness and despair;
 "Thy active hand has dealt to this poor space
 "The bliss of plenty and the charm of grace;
 "And all around us wonder when they find
 "Such taste and strength, such skill and power combined;
 "There is no mother, Colin, no not one,
 "But envies me so kind, so good a son; 450
 "By thee supported on this failing side,
 "Weakness itself awakes a parent's pride;
 "I bless the stroke that was my grief before,
 "And feel such joy that 'tis disease no more;
 "Shielded by thee, my want becomes my wealth—
 "And, soothed by Colin, sickness smiles at health;
 "The old men love thee, they repeat thy praise,
 "And say, like thee were youth in earlier days;
 "While every village-maiden cries, 'How gay,
 "'How smart, how brave, how good is Colin Grey!' 460
 "Yet art thou sad; alas! my son, I know
 "Thy heart is wounded, and the cure is slow;
 "Fain would I think that Jesse still may come
 "To share the comfort of our rustic home:
 "She surely loved thee; I have seen the maid,
 "When thou hast kindly brought the vicar aid—
 "When thou hast eased his bosom of its pain,

JESSE AND COLIN

“Oh! I have seen her—she will come again.”

The matron ceased; and Colin stood the while
 Silent, but striving for a grateful smile;
 He then replied—“Ah! sure, had Jesse stay’d,
 “And shared the comforts of our sylvan shade,
 “The tenderest duty and the fondest love
 “Would not have fail’d that generous heart to move;
 “A grateful pity would have ruled her breast,
 “And my distresses would have made me blest.

470

“But she is gone, and ever has in view
 “Grandeur and taste—and what will then ensue?
 “Surprise and then delight in scenes so fair and new;
 “For many a day, perhaps for many a week,
 “Home will have charms, and to her bosom speak;
 “But thoughtless ease, and affluence, and pride,
 “Seen day by day, will draw the heart aside:
 “And she at length, though gentle and sincere,
 “Will think no more of our enjoyments here.”

480

Sighing he spake—but hark! he hears th’ approach
 Of rattling wheels! and lo! the evening-coach;
 Once more the movement of the horses’ feet
 Makes the fond heart with strong emotion beat;
 Faint were his hopes, but ever had the sight
 Drawn him to gaze beside his gate at night;
 And when with rapid wheels it hurried by,
 He grieved his parent with a hopeless sigh;
 And could the blessing have been bought—what sum
 Had he not offer’d, to have Jesse come!
 She came—he saw her bending from the door,
 Her face, her smile, and he beheld no more;
 Lost in his joy—the mother lent her aid
 T’ assist and to detain the willing maid;
 Who thought her late, her present home to make,
 Sure of a welcome for the vicar’s sake.

490

But the good parent was so pleased, so kind,
 So pressing Colin, she so much inclined,
 That night advanced; and then so long detain’d,
 No wishes to depart she felt, or feign’d;
 Yet long in doubt she stood, and then perforce remain’d.

500

Here was a lover fond, a friend sincere;

183

GEORGE CRABBE

Here was content and joy, for she was here :
In the mild evening, in the scene around,
The maid, now free, peculiar beauties found ; 510
Blended with village-tones, the evening-gale
Gave the sweet night-bird's warblings to the vale ;
The youth embolden'd, yet abash'd, now told
His fondest wish, nor found the maiden cold ;
The mother smiling whisper'd—" Let him go
" And seek the licence ! " Jesse answer'd, " No : "
But Colin went. I know not if they live
With all the comforts wealth and plenty give ;
But with pure joy to envious souls denied,
To suppliant meanness and suspicious pride ; 520
And village-maids of happy couples say,
" They live like Jesse Bourn and Colin Grey."

TALE XIV.

THE STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE.

I am a villain; yet I lie, I am not;
Fool! of thyself speak well:—Fool! do not flatter.
My Conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale.

Richard III. Act V. Scene 3.

My Conscience is but a kind of hard Conscience....The fiend gives the
more friendly counsel.

Merchant of Venice, Act II. Scene 2.

Thou hast it now
. and I fear
Thou play'dst most foully [for't].

Macbeth, Act III. Scene 1.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Rase out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?

Macbeth, Act V. Scene 3.

Soft! I did but dream—
Oh! coward Conscience, how dost thou afflict me!

Richard III. Act V. Scene 3.

TALE XIV.

THE STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE.

A SERIOUS toyman in the city dwelt,
Who much concern for his religion felt;
Reading, he changed his tenets, read again,
And various questions could with skill maintain;
Papist and quaker if we set aside,
He had the road of every traveller tried;
There walk'd awhile, and on a sudden turn'd
Into some by-way he had just discern'd:
He had a nephew, Fulham—Fulham went
His uncle's way, with every turn content;
He saw his pious kinsman's watchful care,
And thought such anxious pains his own might spare,
And he, the truth obtain'd, without the toil, might share.
In fact, young Fulham, though he little read,
Perceived his uncle was by fancy led;
And smiled to see the constant care he took,
Collating creed with creed, and book with book.

At length the senior fix'd; I pass the sect
He call'd a church, 'twas precious and elect;
Yet the seed fell not in the richest soil,
For few disciples paid the preacher's toil;
All in an attic-room were wont to meet,
These few disciples at their pastor's feet;
With these went Fulham, who, discreet and grave,
Follow'd the light his worthy uncle gave;
Till a warm preacher found a way t' impart
Awakening feelings to his torpid heart:

THE STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE

Some weighty truths, and of unpleasant kind,
Sank, though resisted, in his struggling mind ;
He wish'd to fly them, but, compell'd to stay, 30
Truth to the waking Conscience found her way ;
For though the youth was call'd a prudent lad,
And prudent was, yet serious faults he had ;
Who now reflected—"Much am I surprised,
"I find these notions cannot be despised ;
"No! there is something I perceive at last,
"Although my uncle cannot hold it fast ;
"Though I the strictness of these men reject,
"Yet I determine to be circumspect :
"This man alarms me, and I must begin 40
"To look more closely to the things within ;
"These sons of zeal have I derided long,
"But now begin to think the laughers wrong ;
"Nay, my good uncle, by all teachers moved,
"Will be preferr'd to him who none approved :
"Better to love amiss than nothing to have loved." }

Such were his thoughts, when Conscience first began
To hold close converse with th' awaken'd man.

He from that time reserved and cautious grew,
And for his duties felt obedience due ; 50
Pious he was not, but he fear'd the pain
Of sins committed, nor would sin again.
Whene'er he stray'd, he found his Conscience rose,
Like one determined what was ill t' oppose,
What wrong t' accuse, what secret to disclose ;
To drag forth every latent act to light,
And fix them fully in the actor's sight :
This gave him trouble, but he still confess'd
The labour useful, for it brought him rest.

The uncle died, and when the nephew read 60
The will, and saw the substance of the dead—
Five hundred guineas, with a stock in trade—
He much rejoiced, and thought his fortune made ;
Yet felt aspiring pleasure at the sight,
And, for increase, increasing appetite.
Desire of profit idle habits check'd,
(For Fulham's virtue was to be correct) ;

GEORGE CRABBE

He and his Conscience had their compact made—

"Urge me with truth, and you will soon persuade ;

"But not," he cried, "for mere ideal things 70

"Give me to feel those terror-breeding stings."

"Let not such thoughts," she said, "your mind confound ;

"Trifles may wake me, but they never wound ;

"In them indeed there is a wrong and right,

"But you will find me pliant and polite ;

"Not like a Conscience of the dotard kind,

"Awake to dreams, to dire offences blind.

"Let all within be pure ; in all beside

"Be your own master, governor, and guide ;

"Alive to danger, in temptation strong— 80

"And I shall sleep our whole existence long."

"Sweet be thy sleep," said Fulham ; "strong must be

"The tempting ill that gains access to me ;

"Never will I to evil deed consent,

"Or, if surprised, oh ! how will I repent !

"Should gain be doubtful, soon would I restore

"The dangerous good, or give it to the poor ;

"Repose for them my growing wealth shall buy—

"Or build—who knows?—an hospital like Guy.—

"Yet why such means to soothe the smart within, 90

"While firmly purposed to renounce the sin?"

Thus our young Trader and his Conscience dwelt

In mutual love, and great the joy they felt ;

But yet in small concerns, in trivial things,

"She was," he said, "too ready with the stings ;"

And he too apt, in search of growing gains,

To lose the fear of penalties and pains :

Yet these were trifling bickerings, petty jars,

Domestic strifes, preliminary wars ;

He ventured little, little she express'd 100

Of indignation, and they both had rest.

Thus was he fix'd to walk the worthy way,

When profit urged him to a bold essay.—

A time was that when all at pleasure gam'd

In lottery-chances, yet of law unblamed ;

This Fulham tried : who would to him advance

A pound or crown, he gave in turn a chance

THE STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE

For weighty prize—and should they nothing share,
They had their crown or pound in Fulham's ware ;
Thus the old stores within the shop were sold 110
For that which none refuses, new or old.

Was this unjust? Yet Conscience could not rest
But made a mighty struggle in the breast ;
And gave th' aspiring man an early proof,
That should they war he would have work enough :
"Suppose," said she, "your vended numbers rise
"The same with those which gain each real prize,
"(Such your proposal,) can you ruin shun?"
"A hundred thousand," he replied, "to one."—
"Still it may happen."—"I the sum must pay."— 120
"You know you cannot."—"I can run away."—
"That is dishonest."—"Nay, but you must wink
"At a chance-hit ; it cannot be, I think.
"Upon my conduct as a whole decide,
"Such trifling errors let my virtues hide ;
"Fail I at meeting? am I sleepy there?
"My purse refuse I with the priest to share?
"Do I deny the poor a helping hand?
"Or stop the wicked women in the Strand?
"Or drink at club beyond a certain pitch? 130
"Which are your charges? Conscience, tell me which."
"Tis well," said she, "but—" "Nay, I pray, have done :
"Trust me, I will not into danger run."

The lottery drawn, not one demand was made ;
Fulham gain'd profit and increase of trade.
"See now," said he—for Conscience yet arose—
"How foolish 'tis such measures to oppose :
"Have I not blameless thus my state advanced?"—
"Still," mutter'd Conscience, "still it might have chanced."—
"Might!" said our hero, "who is so exact 140
"As to inquire what might have been a fact?"

Now Fulham's shop contain'd a curious view
Of costly trifles, elegant and new :
The papers told where kind mammas might buy
The gayest toys to charm an infant's eye ;
Where generous beaux might gentle damsels please,
And travellers call who cross the land or seas,

GEORGE CRABBE

And find the curious art, the neat device,
Of precious value and of trifling price.

Here Conscience rested: she was pleased to find 150
No less an active than an honest mind;

But, when he named his price, and when he swore,
His Conscience check'd him, that he ask'd no more—
When half he sought had been a large increase
On fair demand—she could not rest in peace
(Beside th' affront to call th' adviser in,
Who would prevent, to justify the sin.)

She therefore told him, that "he vainly tried
"To soothe her anger, conscious that he lied;
"If thus he grasp'd at such usurious gains, 160
"He must deserve, and should expect, her pains."

The charge was strong; he would in part confess
Offence there was—but, who offended less?

"What! is a mere assertion call'd a lie?

"And if it be, are men compell'd to buy?

"'Twas strange that Conscience on such points should
dwell,

"While he was acting (he would call it) well;

"He bought as others buy, he sold as others sell: []

"There was no fraud, and he demanded cause

"Why he was troubled, when he kept the laws?" 170

"My laws?" said Conscience: "What," said he, "are
thine?"

"Oral or written, human or divine?

"Show me the chapter, let me see the text;

"By laws uncertain subjects are perplex'd;

"Let me my finger on the statute lay,

"And I shall feel it duty to obey."

"Reflect," said Conscience, "'twas your own desire

"That I should warn you—does the compact tire?

"Repent you this? then bid me not advise,

"And rather hear your passions as they rise; 180

"So you may counsel and remonstrance shun,

"But then remember it is war begun;

"And you may judge from some attacks, my friend,

"What serious conflicts will on war attend."

"Nay, but," at length the thoughtful man replied,

THE STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE

"I say not that; I wish you for my guide;
"Wish for your checks and your reproofs—but then
"Be like a Conscience of my fellow-men;
"Worthy I mean, and men of good report,
"And not the wretches who with conscience sport. 190
"There's Bice, my friend, who passes off his grease
"Of pigs for bears', in pots a crown apiece;
"His Conscience never checks him when he swears
"The fat he sells is honest fat of bears;
"And so it is, for he contrives to give
"A drachm to each—'tis thus that tradesmen live:
"Now why should you and I be over-nice;
"What man is held in more repute than Bice?"

Here ended the dispute; but yet 'twas plain
The parties both expected strife again. 200
Their friendship cool'd, he look'd about and saw
Numbers who seem'd unshackled by his awe;
While like a school-boy he was threaten'd still,
Now for the deed, now only for the will;
Here Conscience answer'd, "To thy neighbour's guide
"Thy neighbour leave, and in thine own confide."

Such were each day the charges and replies,
When a new object caught the trader's eyes;
A vestry-patriot, could he gain the name,
Would famous make him, and would pay the fame. 210
He knew full well the sums bequeath'd in charge
For schools, for alms-men, for the poor, were large;
Report had told, and he could feel it true,
That most unfairly dealt the trusted few;
No partners would they in their office take,
Nor clear accounts at annual meetings make;
Aloud our hero in the vestry spoke
Of hidden deeds, and vow'd to draw the cloak;
It was the poor man's cause, and he for one
Was quite determined to see justice done. 220
His foes affected laughter, then disdain,
They too were loud and threat'ning, but in vain;
The pauper's friend, their foe, arose and spoke again. }
Fiercely he cried, "Your garbled statements show []
"That you determine we shall nothing know;

GEORGE CRABBE

"But we shall bring your hidden crimes to light,
"Give you to shame, and to the poor their right."

Virtue like this might some approval ask—
But Conscience sternly said, "You wear a mask!"
"At least," said Fulham, "if I have a view
"To serve myself, I serve the public too."

230

Fulham, though check'd, retain'd his former zeal,
And this the cautious rogues began to feel.

"Thus will he ever bark," in peevish tone
An elder cried—"the cur must have a bone."

They then began to hint—and to begin
Was all they needed: it was felt within;
In terms less veil'd an offer then was made,
Though distant still, it fail'd not to persuade;
More plainly then was every point proposed,
Approved, accepted, and the bargain closed.

240

"Th' exulting paupers hail'd their friend's success,
"And bade adieu to murmurs and distress."

Alas! their friend had now superior light,
And, view'd by that, he found that all was right;
"There were no errors, the disbursements small;
"This was the truth, and truth was due to all."

And rested Conscience? No! she would not rest,
Yet was content with making a protest.

Some acts she now with less resistance bore,
Nor took alarm so quickly as before;
Like those in towns besieged, who every ball
At first with terror view, and dread them all;
But, grown familiar with the scenes, they fear
The danger less, as it approaches near:

250

So Conscience, more familiar with the view
Of growing evils, less attentive grew;
Yet he who felt some pain, and dreaded more,
Gave a peace-offering to the angry poor.

Thus had he quiet—but the time was brief,
From his new triumph sprang a cause of grief;
In office join'd, and acting with the rest,
He must admit the sacramental test.

260

Now, as a sectary, who had all his life,
As he supposed, been with the church at strife

THE STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE

(No rules of hers, no laws had he perused,
Nor knew the tenets he by rote abused);
Yet Conscience here arose more fierce and strong,
Than when she told of robbery and wrong;
"Change his religion! No! he must be sure
"That was a blow no conscience could endure." 270

Though friend to virtue, yet she oft abides
In early notions, fix'd by erring guides,
And is more startled by a call from those,
Than when the foulest crimes her rest oppose;
By error taught, by prejudice misled,
She yields her rights, and fancy rules instead;
When Conscience all her stings and terror deals,
Not as truth dictates, but as fancy feels;
And thus within our hero's troubled breast, 280
Crime was less torture than the odious test.

New forms, new measures, he must now embrace,
With sad conviction that they warr'd with grace;
To his new church no former friend would come,
They scarce preferr'd her to the church of Rome.
But, thinking much, and weighing guilt and gain,
Conscience and he commuted for her pain;
Then promised Fulham to retain his creed,
And their peculiar paupers still to feed;
Their attic-room (in secret) to attend, 290
And not forget he was the preacher's friend;
Thus he proposed, and Conscience, troubled, tried,
And wanting peace, reluctantly complied.

Now care subdued, and apprehensions gone,
In peace our hero went aspiring on;
But short the period—soon a quarrel rose,
Fierce in the birth, and fatal in the close;
With times of truce between, which rather proved
That both were weary, than that either loved.

Fulham ev'n now disliked the heavy thrall, 300 }
And for her death would in his anguish call, }
As Rome's mistaken friend exclaim'd, *Let Carthage fall!* []
So felt our hero, so his wish express'd,
Against this powerful sprite—*delenda est.*
Rome in her conquest saw not danger near,

GEORGE CRABBE

Freed from her rival, and without a fear ;
 So, Conscience conquer'd, men perceive how free,
 But not how fatal, such a state must be.
 Fatal, not free, our hero's : foe or friend,
 Conscience on him was destined to attend ; 310
 She [dozed] indeed, grew dull, nor seem'd to spy
 Crime following crime, and each of deeper dye ;
 But all were noticed, and the reckoning time
 With her account came on—crime following crime.

This, once a foe, now brother in the trust,
 Whom Fulham late described as fair and just,
 Was the sole guardian of a wealthy maid,
 Placed in his power, and of his frown afraid :
 Not quite an idiot, for her busy brain
 Sought, by poor cunning, trifling points to gain ; 320
 Success in childish projects her delight,
 She took no heed of each important right.

The friendly parties met—the guardian cried,
 "I am too old ; my sons have each a bride :
 "Martha, my ward, would make an easy wife ;
 "On easy terms I'll make her yours for life ;
 "And then the creature is so weak and mild,
 "She may be soothed and threaten'd as a child—"
 "Yet not obey," said Fulham, "for your fools,
 "Female and male, are obstinate as mules." 330

Some points adjusted, these new friends agreed,
 Proposed the day, and hurried on the deed.

"'Tis a vile act," said Conscience ;—"It will prove,"
 Replied the bolder man, "an act of love ;
 "Her wicked guardian might the girl have sold
 "To endless misery for a tyrant's gold ;
 "Now may her life be happy—for I mean
 "To keep my temper even and serene."
 "I cannot thus compound," the spirit cried,
 "Nor have my laws thus broken and defied ; 340
 "This is a fraud, a bargain for a wife ;
 "Expect my vengeance, or amend your life."

The wife was pretty, trifling, childish, weak ;
 She could not think, but would not cease to speak.
 This he forbade—she took the caution ill,

THE STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE

And boldly rose against his sovereign will ;
With idiot-cunning she would watch the hour,
When friends were present, to dispute his power :
With tyrant-craft, he then was still and calm,
But raised in private terror and alarm :
By many trials, she perceived how far
To vex and tease, without an open war ;
And he discover'd that so weak a mind
No art could lead, and no compulsion bind ;
The rudest force would fail such mind to tame,
And she was callous to rebuke and shame ;
Proud of her wealth, the power of law she knew,
And would assist him in the spending too.
His threat'ning words with insult she defied,
To all his reasoning with a stare replied ;
And when he begg'd her to attend, would say,
"Attend I will—but let me have my way."

350

360

Nor rest had Conscience : "While you merit pain
"From me," she cried, "you seek redress in vain."
His thoughts were grievous : "All that I possess
"From this vile bargain adds to my distress ;
"To pass a life with one who will not mend,
"Who cannot love, nor save, nor wisely spend,
"Is a vile prospect, and I see no end ;
"For if we part, I must of course restore
"Much of her money, and must wed no more.

370

"Is there no way?"—here Conscience rose in power,
"Oh ! fly the danger of this fatal hour ;
"I am thy Conscience, faithful, fond, and true,
"Ah, fly this thought, or evil must ensue ;
"Fall on thy knees, and pray with all thy soul,
"Thy purpose banish, thy design control ;
"Let every hope of such advantage cease,
"Or never more expect a moment's peace."

Th' affrighten'd man a due attention paid,
Felt the rebuke, and the command obey'd.

380

Again the wife rebell'd, again express'd
A love for pleasure—a contempt of rest ;
"She, whom she pleased, would visit, would receive
"Those who pleased her, nor deign to ask for leave."

GEORGE CRABBE

"One way there is," said he; "I might contrive
 "Into a trap this foolish thing to drive:
 "Who pleased her, said she?—I'll be certain who—"
 "Take heed," said Conscience, "what thou mean'st to do:
 "Ensnare thy wife?"—"Why yes," he must confess, 390
 "It might be wrong—but there was no redress;
 "Beside, to think," said he, "is not to sin."
 "Mistaken man!" replied the power within.

No guest unnoticed to the lady came,
 He judged th' event with mingled joy and shame;
 Oft he withdrew, and seem'd to leave her free,
 But still as watchful as a lynx was he;
 Meanwhile the wife was thoughtless, cool, and gay,
 And, without virtue, had no wish to stray.

Though thus opposed, his plans were not resign'd; 400
 "Revenge," said he, "will prompt that daring mind;
 "Refused supplies, insulted and distress'd,
 "Enraged with me, and near a favourite guest—
 "Then will her vengeance prompt the daring deed,
 "And I shall watch, detect her, and be freed."

There was a youth—but let me hide the name,
 With all the progress of this deed of shame;
 He had his views—on him the husband cast
 His net, and saw him in his trammels fast.

"Pause but a moment—think what you intend," 410
 Said the roused sleeper; "I am yet a friend;
 "Must all our days in enmity be spent?"
 "No!" and he paused—"I surely shall repent:"

Then hurried on—the evil plan was laid,
 The wife was guilty, and her friend betray'd,
 And Fulham gain'd his wish, and for his will was paid. }

Had crimes less weighty on the spirit press'd,
 This troubled Conscience might have sunk to rest;
 And, like a foolish guard, been bribed to peace,
 By a false promise, that offence should cease; 420
 Past faults had seem'd familiar to the view,
 Confused if many, and obscure though true;
 And Conscience, troubled with the dull account,
 Had dropp'd her tale, and slumber'd o'er th' amount.
 But, struck by daring guilt, alert she rose,

THE STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE

Disturb'd, alarm'd, and could no more repose ;
 All hopes of friendship, and of peace, were past,
 And every view with gloom was overcast.
 Hence from that day, that day of shame and sin,
 Arose the restless enmity within ; 430
 On no resource could Fulham now rely,
 Doom'd all expedients, and in vain, to try ;
 For Conscience, roused, sat boldly on her throne,
 Watch'd every thought, attack'd the foe alone, }
 And with envenom'd sting drew forth the inward groan : []
 Expedients fail'd that brought relief before,
 In vain his alms gave comfort to the poor : }
 Give what he would, to him the comfort came no more. []
 Not prayer avail'd, and when (his crimes confess'd)
 He felt some ease, she said—"are they redress'd?" 440
 "You still retain the profit, and be sure,
 "Long as it lasts, this anguish shall endure."
 Fulham still tried to soothe her, cheat, mislead ; }
 But Conscience laid her finger on the deed, []
 And read the crime with power, and all that must succeed.
 He tried t' expel her, but was sure to find
 Her strength increased by all that he design'd ;
 Nor ever was his groan more loud and deep,
 Than when refresh'd she rose from momentary sleep.
 Now desperate grown, weak, harass'd, and afraid, 450
 From new allies he sought for doubtful aid ;
 To thought itself he strove to bid adieu,
 And from devotions to diversions flew ;
 He took a poor domestic for a slave,
 (Though Avarice grieved to see the price he gave) ;
 Upon his board, once frugal, press'd a load
 Of viands rich, the appetite to goad ;
 The long-protracted meal, the sparkling cup,
 Fought with his gloom, and kept his courage up ;
 Soon as the morning came, there met his eyes 460
 Accounts of wealth, that he might reading rise ;
 To profit then he gave some active hours,
 Till food and wine again should renovate his powers.
 Yet, spite of all defence, of every aid,
 The watchful foe her close attention paid ;

GEORGE CRABBE

In every thoughtful moment, on she press'd,
And gave at once her dagger to his breast ;
He waked at midnight, and the fears of sin,
As waters through a bursten dam, broke in ;
Nay, in the banquet, with his friends around, 470
When all their cares and half their crimes were drown'd,
Would some chance aſt awake the ſlumbering fear,
And care and crime in all their ſtrength appear :
The news is read, a guilty victim ſwings,
And troubled looks proclaim the boſom-ſtings ;
Some pair are wed ; this brings the wife in view,
And ſome divorced : this ſhows the parting too ;
Nor can he hear of evil word or deed,
But they to thought, and thought to ſufferings lead.

Such was his life—no other changes came, 480
The hurrying day, the conſcious night the ſame ;
The night of horror—when he, ſtarting, cried
To the poor ſtartled ſinner at his ſide :
“Is it in law? am I condemn'd to die?
“Let me eſcape!—I'll give—oh! let me fly—
“How! but a dream—no judges! dungeon! chain!
“Or theſe grim men!—I will not ſleep again.—
“Wilt thou, dread being! thus thy promiſe keep?
“Day is thy time—and wilt thou murder ſleep?
“Sorrow and want reſe, and wilt thou come, 490
“Nor give one hour of pure untroubled gloom?
“Oh! Conſcience! Conſcience! man's moſt faithful friend,
“Him canſt thou comfort, eaſe, relieve, defend ;
“But if he will thy friendly checks forego,
“Thou art, oh! woe for me, his deadlieſt foe!”

TALE XV.

ADVICE ;

OR,

THE 'SQUIRE AND THE PRIEST.

His hours fill'd up with riots, banquets, sports——
And never noted in him any study,
Any retirement, any sequestration.

Henry V. Act I. Scene 1.

I will converse with iron-witted fools,
With unrespective boys; none are for me,
Who look into me with considerate eyes.

Richard III. Act IV. Scene 2.

You cram these words into mine ears, against
The stomach of my sense.

Tempest, Act II. Scene 1.

TALE XV.

THE 'SQUIRE AND THE PRIEST.

A WEALTHY lord of far-extended land
Had all that pleased him placed at his command ;
Widow'd of late, but finding much relief
In the world's comforts, he dismiss'd his grief ;
He was by marriage of his daughters eased,
And knew his sons could marry if they pleased ;
Meantime in travel he indulged the boys,
And kept no spy nor partner of his joys.

These joys, indeed, were of the grosser kind,
That fed the cravings of an earthly mind ;
A mind that, conscious of its own excess,
Felt the reproach his neighbours would express.
Long at th' indulgent board he loved to sit,
Where joy was laughter, and profaneness wit ;
And such the guest and manners of the hall,
No wedded lady on the 'squire would call.
Here reign'd a favourite, and her triumph gain'd
O'er other favourites who before had reign'd ;
Reserved and modest seem'd the nymph to be,
Knowing her lord was charm'd with modesty ;
For he, a sportsman keen, the more enjoy'd,
The greater value had the thing destroy'd.

Our 'squire declared, that, from a wife released,
He would no more give trouble to a priest ;
Seem'd it not, then, ungrateful and unkind,
That he should trouble from the priesthood find ?
The church he honour'd, and he gave the due

THE 'SQUIRE AND THE PRIEST

And full respect to every son he knew ;
But envied those who had the luck to meet
A gentle pastor, civil, and discreet ;
Who never bold and hostile sermon penn'd,
To wound a sinner, or to shame a friend ;
One whom no being either shunn'd or fear'd,
Such must be loved wherever they appear'd.

30

Not such the stern old rector of the time,
Who soothed no culprit, and who spared no crime ;
Who would his fears and his contempt express,
For irreligion and licentiousness ;
Of him our village lord, his guests among,
By speech vindictive proved his feelings stung.

40

"Were he a bigot," said the 'squire, "whose zeal
"Condemn'd us all, I should disdain to feel :
"But when a man of parts, in college train'd,
"Prates of our conduct—who would not be pain'd,
"While he declaims (where no one dares reply)
"On men abandon'd, grov'ling in the sty
"(Like beasts in human shape) of shameless luxury ?
"Yet with a patriot's zeal I stand the shock
"Of vile rebuke, example to his flock ;
"But let this rector, thus severe and proud,
"Change his wide surplice for a narrow shroud,
"And I will place within his seat a youth,
"Train'd by the Graces, to explain the truth ;
"Then shall the flock with gentle hand be led,
"By wisdom won, and by compassion fed."

}
[]

50

This purposed teacher was a sister's son,
Who of her children gave the priesthood one ;
And she had early train'd for this employ
The pliant talents of her college-boy.
At various times her letters painted all
Her brother's views—the manners of the hall ;
The rector's harshness, and the mischief made
By chiding those whom preachers should persuade :
This led the youth to views of easy life,
A friendly patron, an obliging wife ;
His tithe, his glebe, the garden and the steed,
With books as many as he wish'd to read.

60

GEORGE CRABBE

All this accorded with the uncle's will ;
He loved a priest compliant, easy, still ;
Sums he had often to his favourite sent,
70 "To be," he wrote, "in manly freedom spent ;
"For well it pleased his spirit to assist
"An honest lad, who scorn'd a Methodist."
His mother too, in her maternal care,
Bade him of canting hypocrites beware ;
Who from his duties would his heart seduce,
And make his talents of no earthly use.

Soon must a trial of his worth be made—
The ancient priest is to the tomb convey'd ;
And the youth summon'd from a serious friend,
80 His guide and host, new duties to attend.

Three months before, the nephew and the 'squire
Saw mutual worth to praise and to admire ;
And though the one too early left his wine,
The other still exclaim'd—"My boy will shine :
"Yes, I perceive that he will soon improve,
"And I shall form the very guide I love ;
"Decent abroad, he will my name defend,
"And, when at home, be social and unbend."

The plan was specious, for the mind of James
90 Accorded duly with his uncle's schemes :
He then aspired not to a higher name
Than sober clerks of moderate talents claim ;
Gravely to pray, and rev'rendly to preach,
Was all he saw, good youth ! within his reach.
Thus may a mass of sulphur long abide,
Cold and inert, but, to the flame applied,
Kindling it blazes, and consuming turns
To smoke and poison, as it boils and burns.

James, leaving college, to a preacher stray'd ;
100 What call'd, he knew not—but the call obey'd,
Mild, idle, pensive, ever led by those
Who could some specious novelty propose ;
Humbly he listen'd, while the preacher dwelt
On touching themes, and strong emotions felt ;
And in this night was fix'd that pliant will
To one sole point, and he retains it still.

THE 'SQUIRE AND THE PRIEST

At first his care was to himself confined ;
Himself assured, he gave it to mankind :
His zeal grew active—honest, earnest zeal, 110
And comfort dealt to him, he long'd to deal ;
He to his favourite preacher now withdrew,
Was taught to teach, instructed to subdue ;
And train'd for ghostly warfare, when the call
Of his new duties reach'd him from the hall.

Now to the 'squire, although alert and stout,
Came unexpected an attack of gout ;
And the grieved patron felt such serious pain,
He never thought to see a church again.
Thrice had the youthful rector taught the crowd, 120
Whose growing numbers spoke his powers aloud,
Before the patron could himself rejoice
(His pain still lingering) in the general voice ;
For he imputed all this early fame
To graceful manner, and the well-known name ;
And to himself assumed a share of praise,
For worth and talents he was pleased to raise.

A month had flown, and with it fled disease ;
What pleased before, began again to please ;
Emerging daily from his chamber's gloom, 130
He found his old sensations hurrying home ;
Then call'd his nephew, and exclaim'd, "My boy,
"Let us again the balm of life enjoy ;
"The foe has left me, and I deem it right,
"Should he return, to arm me for the fight."

Thus spoke the 'squire, the favourite nymph stood by,
And view'd the priest with insult in her eye.
She thrice had heard him when he boldly spoke
On dangerous points, and fear'd he would revoke ;
For James she loved not—and her manner told, 140
"This warm affection will be quickly cold."
And still she fear'd impression might be made
Upon a subject nervous and decay'd ;
She knew her danger, and had no desire
Of reformation in the gallant 'squire ;
And felt an envious pleasure in her breast
To see the rector daunted and distress'd.

GEORGE CRABBE

Again the uncle to the youth applied—

“Cast, my dear lad, that cursed gloom aside :

“There are for all things time and place ; appear 150

“Grave in your pulpit, and be merry here.

“Now take your wine—for woes a sure resource,

“And the best prelude to a long discourse.”

James half obey'd, but cast an angry eye
On the fair lass, who still stood watchful by ;

Resolving thus, “I have my fears—but still

“I must perform my duties, and I will ;

“No love, no interest, shall my mind control ;

“Better to lose my comforts than my soul ;

“Better my uncle's favour to abjure, 160

“Than the upbraidings of my heart endure.”

He took his glass, and then address'd the 'squire :

“I feel not well, permit me to retire.”

The 'squire conceived that the ensuing day

Gave him these terrors for the grand essay,

When he himself should this young preacher try,

And stand before him with observant eye ;

This raised compassion in his manly breast,

And he would send the rector to his rest ;

Yet first, in soothing voice—“A moment stay, 170

“And these suggestions of a friend obey ;

“Treasure these hints, if fame or peace you prize—

“The bottle emptied, I shall close my eyes.

“On every priest a two-fold care attends,

“To prove his talents, and insure his friends :

“First, of the first—your stores at once produce,

“And bring your reading to its proper use ;

“On doctrines dwell, and every point enforce

“By quoting much, the scholar's sure resource ;

“For he alone can show us on each head 180

“What ancient schoolmen and sage fathers said :

“No worth has knowledge, if you fail to show

“How well you studied, and how much you know.

“Is faith your subject, and you judge it right

“On theme so dark to cast a ray of light :

“Be it that faith the orthodox maintain,

“Found in the rubrick, what the creeds explain ;

THE 'SQUIRE AND THE PRIEST

"Fail not to show us on this ancient faith
"(And quote the passage) what some martyr saith.
"Dwell not one moment on a faith that shocks 7 190
"The minds of men sincere and orthodox :
"That gloomy faith, that robs the wounded mind
"Of all the comfort it was wont to find
"From virtuous acts, and to the soul denies
"Its proper due for alms and charities ;
"That partial faith, that, weighing sins alone,
"Lets not a virtue for a fault atone ;
"That starving faith, that would our tables clear,
"And make one dreadful Lent of all the year ;
"And cruel too, for this is faith that rends 200
"Confiding beauties from protecting friends ;
"A faith that all embracing, what a gloom
"Deep and terrific o'er the land would come !
"What scenes of horror would that time disclose !
"No sight but misery, and no sound but woes ;
"Your nobler faith, in loftier style convey'd,
"Shall be with praise and admiration paid.
"On points like these your hearers all admire
"A preacher's depth, and nothing more require ;
"Shall we a studious youth to college send, 210
"That every clown his words may comprehend ?
"Tis for your glory, when your hearers own
"Your learning matchless, but the sense unknown.
"Thus honour gain'd, learn now to gain a friend,
"And the sure way is—never to offend ;
"For, James, consider—what your neighbours do
"Is their own business, and concerns not you.
"Shun all resemblance to that forward race
"Who preach of sins before a sinner's face ;
"And seem as if they overlook'd a pew, 220
"Only to drag a failing man in view.
"Much should I feel, when groaning in disease,
"If a rough hand upon my limb should seize ;
"But great my anger, if this hand were found
"The very doctor's, who should make it sound ;
"So feel our minds, young priest, so doubly feel,
"When hurt by those whose office is to heal.

GEORGE CRABBE

"Yet of our duties you must something tell,
 "And must at times on sin and frailty dwell;
 "Here you may preach in easy, flowing style, 230
 "How errors cloud us, and how sins defile;
 "Here bring persuasive tropes and figures forth,
 "To show the poor that wealth is nothing worth;
 "That they, in fact, possess an ample share
 "Of the world's good, and feel not half its care;
 "Give them this comfort, and, indeed, my gout
 "In its full vigour causes me some doubt;
 "And let it always, for your zeal, suffice,
 "That vice you combat, in the abstract—vice:
 "The very captious will be quiet then; 240
 "We all confess we are offending men.
 "In lashing sin, of every stroke beware,
 "For sinners feel, and sinners you must spare;
 "In general satire, every man perceives
 "A slight attack, yet neither fears nor grieves;
 "But name th' offence, and you absolve the rest,
 "And point the dagger at a single breast.
 "Yet are there sinners of a class so low,
 "That you with safety may the lash bestow:
 "Poachers, and drunkards, idle rogues, who feed 250
 "At others' cost, a mark'd correction need;
 "And all the better sort, who see your zeal,
 "Will love and reverence for their pastor feel;
 "Reverence for one who can inflict the smart,
 "And love, because he deals them not a part.
 "Remember well what love and age advise;
 "A quiet rector is a parish prize,
 "Who in his learning has a decent pride;
 "Who to his people is a gentle guide;
 "Who only hints at failings that he sees; 260
 "Who loves his glebe, his patron, and his ease,
 "And finds the way to fame and profit is to please." []

The nephew answer'd not, except a sigh
 And look of sorrow might be term'd reply;
 He saw the fearful hazard of his state,
 And held with truth and safety strong debate;
 Nor long he reason'd, for the zealous youth

THE 'SQUIRE AND THE PRIEST

Resolved, though timid, to profess the truth ;
And, though his friend should like a lion roar,
Truth would he preach, and neither less nor more. 170

The bells had toll'd—arrived the time of prayer,
The flock assembled, and the 'squire was there :
And now can poet sing, or proseman say,
The disappointment of that trying day ?

As he who long had train'd a favourite steed
(Whose blood and bone gave promise of his speed),
Sanguine with hope, he runs with partial eye
O'er every feature, and his bets are high ;
Of triumph sure, he sees the rivals start,
And waits their coming with exulting heart ; 280
Forestalling glory, with impatient glance,
And sure to see his conquering steed advance ;
The conquering steed advances—luckless day !

A rival's Herod bears the prize away ;
Nor second his, nor third, but lagging last,
With hanging head he comes, by all surpass'd ;
Surprise and wrath the owner's mind inflame,
Love turns to scorn, and glory ends in shame :—
Thus waited, high in hope, the partial 'squire,
Eager to hear, impatient to admire. 290

When the young preacher in the tones that find
A certain passage to the kindling mind,
With air and accent strange, impressive, sad, 7
Alarm'd the judge—he trembled for the lad ;
But when the text announced the power of grace,
Amazement scowl'd upon his clouded face,
At this degenerate son of his illustrious race ; }
Staring he stood, till hope again arose, []
That James might well define the words he chose :
For this he listen'd—but, alas ! he found 300
The preacher always on forbidden ground.

And now the uncle left the hated pew,
With James, and James's conduct in his view.
A long farewell to all his favourite schemes !
For now no crazed fanatic's frantic dreams
Seem'd vile as James's conduct, or as James. }
All he had long derided, hated, fear'd, []

207

GEORGE CRABBE

This from the chosen youth the uncle heard—
 The needless pause, the fierce disorder'd air,
 The groan for sin, the vehemence of prayer, 310
 Gave birth to wrath, that, in a long discourse
 Of grace, triumphant rose to four-fold force.
 He found his thoughts despised, his rules transgress'd;
 And, while the anger kindled in his breast,
 The pain must be endured that could not be express'd. }
 Each new idea more inflamed his ire, []
 As fuel thrown upon a rising fire:
 A hearer yet, he sought by threatening sign
 To ease his heart, and awe the young divine;
 But James refused those angry looks to meet, 320
 Till he dismiss'd his flock, and left his seat.
 Exhausted then he felt his trembling frame,
 But fix'd his soul—his sentiments the same;
 And therefore wise it seem'd to fly from rage,
 And seek for shelter in his parsonage:
 There, if forsaken, yet consoled to find
 Some comforts left, though not a few resign'd;
 There, if he lost an erring parent's love,
 An honest conscience must the cause approve;
 If the nice palate were no longer fed, 330
 The mind enjoy'd delicious thoughts instead;
 And if some part of earthly good was flown,
 Still was the tithe of ten good farms his own.
 Fear now, and discord, in the village reign,
 The cool remonstrate, and the meek complain;
 But there is war within, and wisdom pleads in vain. }
 Now dreads the uncle, and proclaims his dread, []
 Lest the boy-priest should turn each rustic head;
 The certain converts cost him certain wo;
 The doubtful fear lest they should join the foe; 340
 Matrons of old, with whom he used to joke,
 Now pass his Honour with a pious look;
 Lasses, who met him once with lively airs,
 Now cross his way, and gravely walk to prayers;
 An old companion, whom he long has loved,
 By coward fears confess'd his conscience moved;
 As the third bottle gave its spirit forth.

THE 'SQUIRE AND THE PRIEST

And they bore witness to departed worth,
The friend arose, and he too would depart—
“Man,” said the 'squire, “thou wert not wont to start ; 350
“Hast thou attended to that foolish boy,
“Who would abridge all comforts, or destroy ?”

Yes, he had listen'd, who had slumber'd long,
And was convinced that something must be wrong ;
But, though affected, still his yielding heart,
And craving palate, took the uncle's part.
Wine now oppress'd him, who, when free from wine,
Could seldom clearly utter his design ;
But, though by nature and indulgence weak,
Yet, half-converted, he resolved to speak ; 360
And, speaking, own'd, “that in his mind the youth
“Had gifts and learning, and that truth was truth.
“The 'squire he honour'd, and, for his poor part,
“He hated nothing like a hollow heart ;
“But 'twas a maxim he had often tried,
“That right was right, and there he would abide ;
“He honour'd learning, and he would confess
“The preacher had his talents—more or less :
“Why not agree ? he thought the young divine
“Had no such strictness—they might drink and dine, 370
“For them sufficient—but he said before,
“That truth was truth, and he would drink no more.”

This heard the 'squire with mix'd contempt and pain ;
He fear'd the priest this recreant sot would gain.
The favourite nymph, though not a convert made,
Conceived the man she scorn'd her cause would aid ;
And when the spirits of her lord were low,
The lass presumed the wicked cause to show :
“It was the wretched life his Honour led,
“And would draw vengeance on his guilty head ; 380
“Their loves (Heav'n knew how dreadfully distress'd
“The thought had made her !) were as yet unblest'd :
“And till the church had sanction'd”——here she saw
The wrath that forced her trembling to withdraw.

Add to these outward ills some inward light,
That show'd him all was not correct and right :
Though now he less indulged—and to the poor,

GEORGE CRABBE

From day to day, sent alms from door to door ;
 Though he some ease from easy virtues found,
 Yet conscience told him he could not compound ; 390
 But must himself the darling sin deny,
 Change the whole heart—but here a heavy sigh
 Proclaim'd, "How vast the toil! and ah! how weak am I!" []

James too has trouble—he divided sees
 A parish, once harmonious and at ease :
 With him united are the simply meek,
 The warm, the sad, the nervous, and the weak ;
 The rest his uncle's, save the few beside,
 Who own no doctrine, and obey no guide ;
 With stragglers of each adverse camp, who lend 400
 Their aid to both, but each in turn offend.

Though zealous still, yet he begins to feel
 The heat too fierce, that glows in vulgar zeal ;
 With pain he hears his simple friends relate
 Their week's experience, and their woful state :
 With small temptation struggling every hour,
 And bravely battling with the tempting power ;
 His native sense is hurt by strange complaints
 Of inward motions in these warring saints :
 Who never cast on sinful bait a look 410
 But they perceive the devil at the hook.
 Grieved, yet compell'd to smile, he finds it hard
 Against the blunders of conceit to guard ;
 He sighs to hear the jests his converts cause,
 He cannot give their erring zeal applause ;
 But finds it inconsistent to condemn
 The flights and follies he has nursed in them :
 These, in opposing minds, contempt produce,
 Or mirth occasion, or provoke abuse ;
 On each momentous theme disgrace they bring, 420
 And give to Scorn her poison and her sting.

TALE XVI.

THE CONFIDANT.

Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,
To follow still the changes of the moon,
With fresh suspicion?

Othello, A& III. Scene 3.

Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheeks,
And given my treasure and my rights [of] thee
To thick-eyed musing and cursed melancholy?

Henry IV. A& II. Scene 3.

It is excellent
To have a giant's strength, but [it is] tyrannous
To use it as a giant.

Measure for Measure, A& II. Scene 2.

TALE XVI.

THE CONFIDANT.

ANNA was young and lovely—in her eye
The glance of beauty, in her cheek the dye;
Her shape was slender, and her features small,
But graceful, easy, unaffected all.
The liveliest tints her youthful face disclosed;
There beauty sparkled, and there health reposed;
For the pure blood that flush'd that rosy cheek
Spoke what the heart forbad the tongue to speak;
And told the feelings of that heart as well,
Nay, with more candour than the tongue could tell. 10
Though this fair lass had with the wealthy dwelt,
Yet like the damsel of the cot she felt;
And, at the distant hint or dark surmise,
The blood into the mantling cheek would rise.

Now Anna's station frequent terrors wrought
In one whose looks were with such meaning fraught;
For on a lady, as an humble friend,
It was her painful office to attend.

Her duties here were of the usual kind—
And some the body harass'd, some the mind: 20
Billets she wrote, and tender stories read,
To make the lady sleepy in her bed;
She play'd at whist, but with inferior skill,
And heard the summons as a call to drill;
Music was ever pleasant till she play'd
At a request that no request convey'd;
The lady's tales with anxious looks she heard,

THE CONFIDANT

For she must witness what her friend averr'd ;
The lady's taste she must in all approve,
Hate whom she hated, whom she loved must love ; 30
These, with the various duties of her place,
With care she studied, and perform'd with grace ;
She veil'd her troubles in a mask of ease,
And show'd her pleasure was a power to please.

Such were the damsel's duties ; she was poor—
Above a servant, but with service more.
Men on her face with careless freedom gazed,
Nor thought how painful was the glow they raised ;
A wealthy few to gain her favour tried,
But not the favour of a grateful bride : 40
They spoke their purpose with an easy air,
That shamed and frighten'd the dependent fair :
Past time she view'd, the passing time to cheat,
But nothing found to make the present sweet ;
With pensive soul she read life's future page,
And saw dependent, poor, repining age.

But who shall dare t' assert what *years* may bring,
When wonders from the passing *hour* may spring?—
There dwelt a yeoman in the place, whose mind
Was gentle, generous, cultivated, kind ; 50
For thirty years he labour'd ; fortune then
Placed the mild rustic with superior men :
A richer Stafford, who had lived to save,
What he had treasured to the poorer gave ;
Who with a sober mind that treasure view'd,
And the slight studies of his youth renew'd.
He not profoundly, but discreetly read,
And a fair mind with useful culture fed ;
Then thought of marriage—"But the great," said he,
"I shall not suit, nor will the meaner me." 60

Anna he saw, admired her modest air ;
He thought her virtuous, and he knew her fair ;
Love raised his pity for her humble state,
And prompted wishes for her happier fate ;
No pride in money would his feelings wound,
Nor vulgar manners hurt him and confound :
He then the lady at the hall address'd,

GEORGE CRABBE

Sought her consent, and his regard express'd ;
 Yet, if some cause his earnest wish denied,
 He begg'd to know it ; and he bow'd and sigh'd.

70

The lady own'd that she was loth to part,
 But praised the damsel for her gentle heart,
 Her pleasing person, and her blooming health ;
 But ended thus, " Her virtue is her wealth."

" Then is she rich ! " he cried, with lively air ;
 " But whence, so please you, came a lass so fair ? "

" A placeman's child was Anna, one who died
 " And left a widow by afflictions tried ;
 " She to support her infant daughter strove,
 " But early left the object of her love ;
 " Her youth, her beauty, and her orphan-state
 " Gave a kind countess interest in her fate ;
 " With her she dwelt, and still might dwelling be,
 " When the earl's folly caused the lass to flee ;

80

" A second friend was she compell'd to shun,
 " By the rude offers of an uncheck'd son ;
 " I found her then, and with a mother's love
 " Regard the gentle girl whom you approve.
 " Yet, e'en with me, protection is not peace ;
 " Nor man's designs, nor beauty's trial, cease ;
 " Like sordid boys by costly fruit they feel :
 " They will not purchase, but they try to steal."

90

Now this good lady, like a witness true,
 Told but the truth, and all the truth she knew ;
 And 'tis our duty and our pain to show
 Truth this good lady had not means to know.
 Yes, there was lock'd within the damsel's breast
 A fact important to be now confess'd ;
 Gently, my muse, th' afflicting tale relate,
 And have some feeling for a sister's fate.

100

Where Anna dwelt, a conquering hero came—
 An Irish captain, Sedley was his name ;
 And he too had that same prevailing art,
 That gave soft wishes to the virgin's heart.
 In years they differ'd ; he had thirty seen
 When this young beauty counted just fifteen ;
 But still they were a lovely lively pair,

THE CONFIDANT

And trod on earth as if they trod on air.

On love, delightful theme! the captain dwelt
With force still growing with the hopes he felt;
But with some caution and reluctance told,
He had a father crafty, harsh, and old;
Who, as possessing much, would much expect,
Or both, for ever, from his love reject:
Why then offence to one so powerful give,
Who (for their comfort) had not long to live?

110

With this poor prospect the deluded maid,
In words confiding, was indeed betray'd;
And, soon as terrors in her bosom rose,
The hero fled; they hinder'd his repose.
Deprived of him, she to a parent's breast
Her secret trusted, and her pains impress'd:
Let her to town (so prudence urged) repair,
To shun disgrace, at least to hide it there;
But ere she went, the luckless damsel pray'd
A chosen friend might lend her timely aid:
"Yes! my soul's sister, my Eliza, come,
"Hear her last sigh, and ease thy Anna's doom:"

120

"'Tis a fool's wish," the angry father cried,
But, lost in troubles of his own, complied;
And dear Eliza to her friend was sent,
T' indulge that wish, and be her punishment:
The time arrived, and brought a tenfold dread;
The time was past, and all the terror fled;
The infant died; the face resumed each charm,
And reason now brought trouble and alarm:
"Should her Eliza—no! she was too just,
"Too good and kind—but ah! too young to trust."

130

Anna return'd, her former place resumed,
And faded beauty with new grace re-bloom'd;
And, if some whispers of the past were heard,
They died innoxious, as no cause appear'd;
But other cares on Anna's bosom press'd,
She saw her father gloomy and distress'd;
He died o'erwhelm'd with debt, and soon was shed
The filial sorrow o'er a mother dead:

140

She sought Eliza's arms, that faithful friend was wed; }

215

GEORGE CRABBE

Then was compassion by the countess shown,
And all th' adventures of her life are known.

And now beyond her hopes—no longer tried 150
By slavish awe—she lived a yeoman's bride ;
Then bless'd her lot, and with a grateful mind
Was careful, cheerful, vigilant, and kind.
The gentle husband felt supreme delight,
Bless'd by her joy, and happy in her sight ;
He saw with pride in every friend and guest
High admiration and regard express'd ;
With greater pride, and with superior joy,
He look'd exulting on his first-born boy ;
To her fond breast the wife her infant strain'd, 160
Some feelings utter'd, some were not explain'd ;
And she enraptured with her treasure grew,
The sight familiar, but the pleasure new.

Yet there appear'd within that tranquil state
Some threat'ning prospect of uncertain fate ;
Between the married when a secret lies,
It wakes suspicion from enforced disguise.
Still thought the wife upon her absent friend,
With all that must upon her truth depend :
"There is no being in the world beside, 170
"Who can discover what that friend will hide ;
"Who knew the fact, knew not my name or state,
"Who these can tell cannot the fact relate ;
"But thou, Eliza, canst the whole impart,
"And all my safety is thy generous heart."

Mix'd with these fears—but light and transient these—
Fled years of peace, prosperity, and ease ;
So tranquil all that scarce a gloomy day
For days of gloom unmix'd prepared the way.
One eve, the wife, still happy in her state, 180
Sang gaily, thoughtless of approaching fate ;
Then came a letter, that (received in dread
Not unobserved) she in confusion read ;
The substance this—"Her friend rejoiced to find
"That she had riches with a grateful mind ;
"While poor Eliza had from place to place
"Been lured by hope to labour for disgrace ;

THE CONFIDANT

"That every scheme her wandering husband tried,
 "Pain'd while he lived, and perish'd when he died."
 She then of want in angry style complain'd :
 Her child a burthen to her life remain'd,
 Her kindred shunn'd her prayers, no friend her soul sus-
 tain'd.

190]

"Yet why neglected? Dearest Anna knew
 "Her worth once tried, her friendship ever true ;
 "She hoped, she trusted, though by wants oppress'd,
 "To lock the treasured secret in her breast ;
 "Yet, vex'd by trouble, must apply to one,
 "For kindness due to her for kindness done."

In Anna's mind was tumult ; in her face
 Flushings of dread had momentary place.
 "I must," she judged, "these cruel lines expose,
 "Or fears, or worse than fears, my crime disclose."

200

The letter shown, he said, with sober smile—
 "Anna, your friend has not a friendly style.
 "Say, where could you with this fair lady dwell,
 "Who boasts of secrets that she scorns to tell?"
 "At school," she answer'd ; he "at school !" replied ;
 "Nay, then I know the secrets you would hide :
 "Some [early] longings these, without dispute ;
 "Some youthful gaspings for forbidden fruit.
 "Why so disorder'd, love ? are such the crimes
 "That give us sorrow in our graver times ?
 "Come, take a present for your friend, and rest
 "In perfect peace—you find you are confess'd."

210

This cloud, though past, alarm'd the conscious wife,
 Presaging gloom and sorrow for her life ;
 Who to her answer join'd a fervent prayer,
 That her Eliza would a sister spare :
 If she again—but was there cause?—should send,
 Let her direct—and then she named a friend.—
 A sad expedient, untried friends to trust,
 And still to fear the tried may be unjust :
 Such is his pain, who, by his debt oppress'd,
 Seeks by new bonds a temporary rest.

220

Few were her peaceful days till Anna read
 The words she dreaded, and had cause to dread :—

217

GEORGE CRABBE

“Did she believe, did she, unkind, suppose
“That thus Eliza’s friendship was to close?
“No! though she tried, and her desire was plain,
“To break the friendly bond, she strove in vain: 230
“Ask’d she for silence? why so loud the call,
“And yet the token of her love so small?
“By means like these will you attempt to bind
“And check the movements of an injured mind?
“Poor as I am, I shall be proud to show
“What dangerous secrets I may safely know.
“Secrets, to men of jealous minds convey’d,
“Have many a noble house in ruins laid;
“Anna, I trust, although with wrongs beset,
“And urged by want, I shall be faithful yet; 240
“But what temptation may from these arise,
“To take a slighted woman by surprise,
“Becomes a subject for your serious care—
“For who offends, must for offence prepare.”

Perplex’d, dismay’d, the wife foresaw her doom;
A day deferr’d was yet a day to come;
But still, though painful her suspended state,
She dreaded more the crisis of her fate;
Better to die than Stafford’s scorn to meet,
And her strange friend perhaps would be discreet. 250
Presents she sent, and made a strong appeal
To woman’s feelings, begging her to feel;
With too much force she wrote of jealous men,
And her tears falling spoke beyond the pen;
Eliza’s silence she again implored,
And promised all that prudence could afford.

For looks composed and careless Anna tried;
She seem’d in trouble, and unconscious sigh’d:
The faithful husband, who devoutly loved
His silent partner, with concern reproved: 260
“What secret sorrows on my Anna press,
“That love may not partake, nor care redress?”
“None, none,” she answer’d, with a look so kind,
That the fond man determined to be blind.

A few succeeding weeks of brief repose
In Anna’s cheek revived the faded rose;

THE CONFIDANT

A hue like this the western sky displays,
That glows awhile, and withers as we gaze.

Again the friend's tormenting letter came—

"The wants she suffer'd were affection's shame; . 270

"She with her child a life of terrors led,

"Unhappy fruit! but of a lawful bed.

"Her friend was tasting every bliss in life,

"The joyful mother, and the wealthy wife;

"While she was placed in doubt, in fear, in want,

"To starve on trifles that the happy grant;

"Poorly for all her faithful silence paid,

"And tantalized by ineffectual aid.

"She could not thus a beggar's lot endure;

"She wanted something permanent and sure: 280

"If they were friends, then equal be their lot,

"And she was free to speak if they were not."

Despair and terror seized the wife, to find

The artful workings of a vulgar mind:

Money she had not, but the hint of dress

Taught her new bribes, new terrors to redress;

She with such feeling then described her woes,

That envy's self might on the view repose;

Then to a mother's pains she made appeal,

And painted grief like one compell'd to feel. 290

Yes! so she felt, that in her air, her face,

In every purpose, and in every place;

In her slow motion, in her languid mien,

The grief, the sickness of her soul were seen.

Of some mysterious ill the husband sure,

Desired to trace it, for he hoped to cure;

Something he knew obscurely, and had seen

His wife attend a cottage on the green;

Love, loth to wound, endured conjecture long,

Till fear would speak, and spoke in language strong. 300

"All I must know, my Anna—truly know

"Whence these emotions, terrors, troubles flow;

"Give me thy grief, and I will fairly prove

"Mine is no selfish, no ungenerous love."

Now Anna's soul the seat of strife became:

Fear with respect contended, love with shame;

GEORGE CRABBE

But fear, prevailing, was the ruling guide,
Prescribing what to show and what to hide.

"It is my friend," she said—"but why disclose
"A woman's weakness struggling with her woes? 310
"Yes, she has grieved me by her fond complaints,
"The wrongs she suffers, the distress she paints;
"Something we do—but she afflicts me still,
"And says, with power to help, I want the will.
"This plaintive style I pity and excuse,
"Help when I can, and grieve when I refuse;
"But here my useless sorrows I resign,
"And will be happy in a love like thine."

The husband doubted; he was kind but cool:—
"Tis a strong friendship to arise at school; 320
"Once more then, love, once more the sufferer aid—
"I too can pity, but I must upbraid;
"Of these vain feelings then thy bosom free,
"Nor be o'erwhelm'd by useless sympathy."

The wife again despatch'd the useless bribe,
Again essay'd her terrors to describe;
Again with kindest words entreated peace,
And begg'd her offerings for a time might cease.

A calm succeeded, but too like the one
That causes terror ere the storm comes on: 330
A secret sorrow lived in Anna's heart,
In Stafford's mind a secret fear of art;
Not long they lasted—this determined foe
Knew all her claims, and nothing would forego;
Again her letter came, where Anna read,
"My child, one cause of my distress, is dead;
"Heav'n has my infant." "Heartless wretch!" she cried,
"Is this thy joy?"—"I am no longer tied:
"Now will I, hast'ning to my friend, partake
"Her cares and comforts, and no more forsake; 340
"Now shall we both in equal station move,
"Save that my friend enjoys a husband's love."

Complaint and threats so strong the wife amazed,
Who wildly on her cottage-neighbour gazed;
Her tones, her trembling, first betray'd her grief;
When floods of tears gave anguish its relief.

THE CONFIDANT

She fear'd that Stafford would refuse assent,
And knew her selfish friend would not relent;
She must petition, yet delay'd the task,
Ashamed, afraid, and yet compell'd to ask; 350
Unknown to him some object filled her mind,
And, once suspicious, he became unkind.—
They sate one evening, each absorb'd in gloom,
When, hark! a noise and rushing to the room,
The friend tripp'd lightly in, and laughing said, "I come." [] }

Anna received her with an anxious mind,
And meeting whisper'd, "Is Eliza kind?"
Reserved and cool, the husband sought to prove
The depth and force of this mysterious love.
To nought that pass'd between the stranger-friend 360
And his meek partner seem'd he to attend;
But, anxious, listen'd to the lightest word
That might some knowledge of his guest afford;
And learn the reason one to him so dear
Should feel such fondness, yet betray such fear.

Soon he perceived this uninvited guest,
Unwelcome too, a sovereign power possess'd;
Lofty she was and careless, while the meek
And humbled Anna was afraid to speak:
As mute she listen'd with a painful smile, 370
Her friend sate laughing and at ease the while,
Telling her idle tales with all the glee
Of careless and unfeeling levity.

With calm good sense he knew his wife endued,
And now with wounded pride her conduct view'd;
Her speech was low, her every look convey'd—
"I am a slave, subservient and afraid."
All trace of comfort vanish'd if she spoke;
The noisy friend upon her purpose broke,
To her remarks with insolence replied, 380
And her assertions doubted or denied;
While the meek Anna like an infant shook,
Wo-struck and trembling at the serpent's look.

"There is," said Stafford, "yes, there is a cause—
"This creature frights her, overpowers and awes."
Six weeks had pass'd—"In truth, my love, this friend

GEORGE CRABBE

"Has liberal notions ; what does she intend ?

"Without a hint she came, and will she stay

"Till she receives the hint to go away ?"

Confused the wife replied, in spite of truth,

390

"I love the dear companion of my youth."

"'Tis well," said Stafford ; "then your loves renew ;

"Trust me, your rivals, Anna, will be few."

Though playful this, she felt too much distress'd

T' admit the consolation of a jest ;

Ill she reposed, and in her dreams would sigh

And, murmuring forth her anguish, beg to die ;

With sunken eye, slow pace, and pallid cheek,

She look'd confusion, and she fear'd to speak.

All this the friend beheld, for, quick of sight,

400

She knew the husband eager for her flight ;

And that by force alone she could retain

The lasting comforts she had hope to gain :

She now perceived, to win her post for life,

She must infuse fresh terrors in the wife ;

Must bid to friendship's feebler ties adieu,

And boldly claim the object in her view ;

She saw the husband's love, and knew the power

Her friend might use in some propitious hour.

Meantime the anxious wife, from pure distress

410

Assuming courage, said, "I will confess ;"

But with her children felt a parent's pride,

And sought once more the hated truth to hide.

Offended, grieved, impatient, Stafford bore

The odious change till he could bear no more.

A friend to truth, in speech and action plain,

He held all fraud and cunning in disdain ;

But fraud to find, and falsehood to detect,

For once he fled to measures indirect.

One day the friends were seated in that room

420

The guest with care adorn'd, and named her home.

To please the eye, there curious prints were placed,

And some light volumes to amuse the taste ;

Letters and music, on a table laid,

The favourite studies of the fair betray'd ;

Beneath the window was the toilet spread,

THE CONFIDANT

And the fire gleam'd upon a crimson bed.

In Anna's looks and falling tears were seen
How interesting had their subjects been :

"Oh ! then," resumed the friend, "I plainly find

430

"That you and Stafford know each other's mind ;

"I must depart, must on the world be thrown,

"Like one discarded, worthless and unknown ;

"But shall I carry, and to please a foe,

"A painful secret in my bosom ? No !

"Think not your friend a reptile you may tread

"Beneath your feet, and say, the worm is dead :

"I have some feeling, and will not be made

"The scorn of her whom love cannot persuade.

"Would not your word, your slightest wish, effect

440

"All that I hope, petition, or expect ?

"The power you have, but you the use decline—

"Proof that you feel not, or you fear not mine.

"There was a time, when I, a tender maid,

"Flew at a call, and your desires obey'd ;

"A very mother to the child became,

"Consoled your sorrow, and conceal'd your shame ;

"But now, grown rich and happy, from the door

"You thrust a bosom-friend, despised and poor ;

"That child alive, its mother might have known

450

"The hard, ungrateful spirit she has shown."

Here paused the guest, and Anna cried at length—

"You try me, cruel friend ! beyond my strength ;

"Would I had been beside my infant laid,

"Where none would vex me, threaten, or upbraid."

In Anna's looks the friend beheld despair ;

Her speech she soften'd, and composed her air ;

Yet, while professing love, she answered still—

"You can befriend me, but you want the will."

They parted thus, and Anna went her way,

460

To shed her secret sorrows, and to pray.

Stafford, amused with books, and fond of home,

By reading oft dispell'd the evening gloom ;

History or tale—all heard him with delight,

And thus was pass'd this memorable night.

The listening friend bestow'd a flattering smile ;

GEORGE CRABBE

A sleeping boy the mother held the while ;
And, ere she fondly bore him to his bed,
On his fair face the tear of anguish shed.

And now, his task resumed, "My tale," said he, 470
"Is short and sad, short may our sadness be!"—

"The Caliph Harun¹, as historians tell,
"Ruled, for a tyrant, admirably well ;
"Where his own pleasures were not touch'd, to men
"He was humane, and sometimes even then.

"Harun was fond of fruits, and gardens fair ;
"And wo to all whom he found poaching there.
"Among his pages was a lively boy,

"Eager in search of every trifling joy ;
"His feelings vivid, and his fancy strong, 480

"He sigh'd for pleasure while he shrank from wrong ;

"When by the caliph in the garden placed,
"He saw the treasures which he long'd to taste ;
"And oft alone he ventured to behold

"Rich hanging fruits with rind of glowing gold ;

"Too long he staid forbidden bliss to view,

"His virtue failing, as his longings grew ;

"Athirst and wearied with the noon-tide heat,

"Fate to the garden led his luckless feet ;

"With eager eyes and open mouth he stood, 490

"Smelt the sweet breath, and touch'd the fragrant food ;

"The tempting beauty sparkling in the sun

"Charm'd his young sense—he ate, and was undone.

"When the fond glutton paused, his eyes around

"He turn'd, and eyes upon him turning found ;

"Pleased he beheld the spy, a brother-page,

"A friend allied in office and in age ;

"Who promised much that secret he would be,

"But high the price he fix'd on secrecy.

"'Were you suspected, my unhappy friend,' 500

"Began the boy, 'where would your sorrows end ?

"'In all the palace there is not a page

"'The caliph would not torture in his rage :

¹ The sovereign here meant is the Haroun Alraschid, or Harun al Rashid, who died early in the ninth century ; he is often the hearer, and sometimes the hero, of a tale in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments.

THE CONFIDANT

“I think I see thee now impaled alive,
“Writhing in pangs—but come, my friend! revive;
“Had some beheld you, all your purse contains
“Could not have saved you from terrific pains;
“I scorn such meanness; and, if not in debt,
“Would not an asper on your folly set.”

“The hint was strong; young Osmyn search’d his store
“For bribes, and found he soon could bribe no more; 511
“That time arrived, for Osmyn’s stock was small,
“And the young tyrant now possess’d it all;
“The cruel youth, with his companions near,
“Gave the broad hint that raised the sudden fear;
“Th’ ungenerous insult now was daily shown,
“And Osmyn’s peace and honest pride were flown;
“Then came augmenting woes, and fancy strong
“Drew forms of suffering, a tormenting throng;
“He felt degraded, and the struggling mind 520
“Dared not be free, and could not be resign’d;
“And all his pains and fervent prayers obtain’d
“Was truce from insult, while the fears remain’d.

“One day it chanced that this degraded boy
“And tyrant-friend were fix’d at their employ;
“Who now had thrown restraint and form aside,
“And for his bribe in plainer speech applied:
“Long have I waited, and the last supply
“Was but a pittance, yet how patient I!
“But, give me now what thy first terrors gave, 530
“My speech shall praise thee, and my silence save.”

“Osmyn had found, in many a dreadful day,
“The tyrant fiercer when he seem’d in play:
“He begg’d forbearance: ‘I have not to give;
“Spare me awhile, although ’tis pain to live.
“Oh! had that stolen fruit the power possess’d
“To war with life, I now had been at rest.’

“‘So fond of death,’ replied the boy, ‘’tis plain
“Thou hast no certain notion of the pain;
“But, to the caliph were a secret shown, 540
“Death has no pain that would be then unknown,
“Now,” says the story, “in a closet near,
“The monarch, seated, chanced the boys to hear;

GEORGE CRABBE

"There oft he came, when wearied on his throne,
 "To read, sleep, listen, pray, or be alone.

"The tale proceeds: when first the caliph found
 "That he was robb'd, although alone, he frown'd;
 "And swore in wrath, that he would send the boy
 "Far from his notice, favour, or employ;
 "But gentler movements soothed his ruffled mind,
 "And his own failings taught him to be kind.

550

"Relenting thoughts then painted Osmyn young,
 "His passion urgent, and temptation strong;
 "And that he suffer'd from that villain-spy
 "Pains worse than death till he desired to die;
 "Then, if his morals had received a stain,
 "His bitter sorrows made him pure again;
 "To Reason Pity lent her generous aid,
 "For one so tempted, troubled, and betray'd;
 "And a free pardon the glad boy restored
 "To the kind presence of a gentle lord;
 "Who from his office and his country drove
 "That traitor-friend, whom pains nor pray'rs could move;
 "Who raised the fears no mortal could endure,
 "And then with cruel av'rice sold the cure.

560

"My tale is ended; but, to be applied,
 "I must describe the place where caliphs hide."

Here both the females look'd alarm'd, distress'd,
 With hurried passions hard to be express'd.

"It was a closet by a chamber placed,
 "Where slept a lady of no vulgar taste;
 "Her friend attended in that chosen room
 "That she had honour'd and proclaim'd her home;
 "To please the eye were chosen pictures placed,
 "And some light volumes to amuse the taste;
 "Letters and music on a table laid,
 "For much the lady wrote, and often play'd;
 "Beneath the window was a toilet spread,
 "And a fire gleam'd upon a crimson bed."

570

He paused, he rose; with troubled joy the wife
 Felt the new era of her changeful life;
 Frankness and love appear'd in Stafford's face,
 And all her trouble to delight gave place.

580

THE CONFIDANT

Twice made the guest an effort to sustain
Her feelings, twice resumed her seat in vain,
Nor could suppress her shame, nor could support her pain. }
Quick she retired, and all the dismal night []
Thought of her guilt, her folly, and her flight ;
Then sought unseen her miserable home,
To think of comforts lost, and brood on wants to come. 590

TALE XVII.

RESENTMENT.

She hath a tear for pity, and a hand
Open as day for melting charity;
Yet, notwithstanding, being incensed, is flint——
Her temper, therefore, must be well observ'd.
2 *Henry IV.* A& IV. Scene 4.

Three or four wenches, where I stood, cried—"Alas! good soul!" and forgave him with all their hearts; but [there's] no heed to be taken of them; if Cæsar had stabb'd their mothers, they would have done no less.

Julius Cæsar, A& I. Scene 2.

How dost...? Art cold?
I'm cold myself—Where is the straw, my fellow?
The art of our necessities is strange,
That can make vile things precious.
King Lear, A& III. Scene 2.

TALE XVII.

RESENTMENT.

FEMALES there are of unsuspicious mind,
Easy and soft, and credulous and kind ;
Who, when offended for the twentieth time,
Will hear th' offender and forgive the crime ;
And there are others whom, like these to cheat,
Asks but the humblest effort of deceit ;
But they, once injured, feel a strong disdain,
And, seldom pardoning, never trust again ;
Urged by religion, they forgive—but yet
Guard the warm heart, and never more forget.
Those are like wax—apply them to the fire,
Melting, they take th' impressions you desire ;
Easy to mould, and fashion as you please,
And again moulded with an equal ease ;
Like smelted iron these the forms retain,
But once impress'd will never melt again.

10

A busy port a serious merchant made
His chosen place to recommence his trade ;
And brought his lady, who, their children dead,
Their native seat of recent sorrow fled.
The husband duly on the quay was seen ;
The wife at home became at length serene ;
There in short time the social couple grew
With all acquainted, friendly with a few ;
When the good lady, by disease assail'd,
In vain resisted—hope and science fail'd.
Then spake the female friends, by pity led,

20

GEORGE CRABBE

"Poor merchant Paul! what think ye? will he wed?"

"A quiet, easy, kind, religious man,

"Thus can he rest?—I wonder if he can."

30

He too, as grief subsided in his mind,

Gave place to notions of congenial kind;

Grave was the man, as we have told before;

His years were forty—he might pass for more;

Composed his features were, his stature low,

His air important, and his motion slow;

His dress became him, it was neat and plain,

The colour purple, and without a stain;

His words were few, and special was his care

In simplest terms his purpose to declare;

40

A man more civil, sober, and discreet,

More grave and courteous, you could seldom meet.

Though frugal he, yet sumptuous was his board,

As if to prove how much he could afford;

For, though reserved himself, he loved to see

His table plenteous, and his neighbours free.

Among these friends he sat in solemn style,

And rarely soften'd to a sober smile;

For this observant friends their reasons gave—

"Concerns so vast would make the idlest grave;

50

"And for such man to be of language free,

"Would seem incongruous as a singing tree:

"Trees have their music, but the birds they shield

"The pleasing tribute for protection yield;

"Each ample tree the tuneful choir defends,

"As this rich merchant cheers his happy friends!"

In the same town it was his chance to meet

A gentle lady, with a mind discreet;

Neither in life's decline, nor bloom of youth,

One fam'd for maiden modesty and truth.

60

By nature cool, in pious habits bred,

She look'd on lovers with a virgin's dread:

Deceivers, rakes, and libertines were they,

And harmless beauty their pursuit and prey;

As bad as giants in the ancient times

Were modern lovers, and the same their crimes.

Soon as she heard of her all-conquering charms,

RESENTMENT

At once she fled to her defensive arms ;
Conn'd o'er the tales her maiden aunt had told,
And, statue-like, was motionless and cold ;
From prayer of love, like that Pygmalion pray'd,
Ere the hard stone became the yielding maid,
A different change in this chaste nymph ensued,
And turn'd to stone the breathing flesh and blood.

70

Whatever youth described his wounded heart,
"He came to rob her, and she scorn'd his art ;
"And who of raptures once presumed to speak,
"Told listening maids he thought them fond and weak.

"But should a worthy man his hopes display

"In few plain words, and beg a *yes* or *no*,

"He would deserve an answer just and plain,

"Since adulation only moved disdain—

"Sir, if my friends object not, come again."

80
}

Hence, our grave lover, though he liked the face,
Praised not a feature—dwelt not on a grace ;
But in the simplest terms declared his state :

"A widow'd man, who wish'd a virtuous mate ;

"Who fear'd neglect, and was compell'd to trust

"Dependents wasteful, idle, or unjust ;

"Or, should they not the trusted stores destroy,

"At best, they could not help him to enjoy ;

"But with her person and her prudence blest,

"His acts would prosper, and his soul have rest.

"Would she be his ?"—"Why, that was much to say ;

"She would consider ; he awhile might stay ;

"She liked his manners, and believed his word ;

"He did not flatter, flattery she abhor'd ;

"It was her happy lot in peace to dwell—

"Would change make better what was now so well ?

"But she would ponder."—"This," he said, "was kind,"

And begg'd to know "when she had fix'd her mind."

100

Romantic maidens would have scorn'd the air,
And the cool prudence of a mind so fair ;
But well it pleased this wiser maid to find
Her own mild virtues in her lover's mind.

His worldly wealth she sought, and quickly grew
Pleased with her search, and happy in the view

231

GEORGE CRABBE

Of vessels freighted with abundant stores,
Of rooms whose treasures press'd the groaning floors ;
And he of clerks and servants could display
A little army, on a public day :
Was this a man like needy bard to speak
Of balmy lip, bright eye, or rosy cheek ?

110

The sum appointed for her widow'd state,
Fix'd by her friend, excited no debate ;
Then the kind lady gave her hand and heart,
And, never finding, never dealt with art :
In his engagements she had no concern ;
He taught her not, nor had she wish to learn :
On him in all occasions she relied,
His word her surety, and his worth her pride.

120

When ship was launch'd, and merchant Paul had share,
A bounteous feast became the lady's care ;
Who then her entry to the dinner made,
In costly raiment, and with kind parade.

Call'd by this duty on a certain day,
And robed to grace it in a rich array,
Forth from her room with measured step she came,
Proud of th' event, and stately look'd the dame.

The husband met her at his study-door—
"This way, my love—one moment and no more :
"A trifling business—you will understand,
"The law requires that you affix your hand ;
"But first attend, and you shall learn the cause
"Why forms like these have been prescribed by laws :"

130

Then from his chair a man in black arose,
And with much quickness hurried off his prose :
That "Ellen Paul the wife, and so forth, freed
"From all control, her own the act and deed,
"And forasmuch"—said she, "I've no distrust,
"For he that asks it is discreet and just ;
"Our friends are waiting—where am I to sign?—
"There!—Now be ready when we meet to dine."

140

This said, she hurried off in great delight:
The ship was launch'd, and joyful was the night.

Now, says the reader, and in much disdain,
This serious merchant was a rogue in grain ;

RESENTMENT

A treacherous wretch, an artful, sober knave,
And ten times worse for manners cool and grave;
And she devoid of sense, to set her hand
To scoundrel deeds she could not understand. 150

Alas! 'tis true; and I in vain had tried
To soften crime, that cannot be denied;
And might have labour'd many a tedious verse
The latent cause of mischief to rehearse:
Be it confess'd, that long with troubled look
This trader view'd a huge accompting-book
(His former marriage for a time delay'd
The dreaded hour, the present lent its aid);
But he too clearly saw the evil day, 160
And put the terror, by deceit, away;
Thus by connecting with his sorrows crime,
He gain'd a portion of uneasy time.—
All this too late the injured lady saw,
What law had given, again she gave to law;
His guilt, her folly—these at once impress'd
Their lasting feelings on her guileless breast.

"Shame I can bear," she cried, "and want sustain,
"But will not see this guilty wretch again:"
For all was lost, and he, with many a tear,
Confess'd the fault—she turning scorn'd to hear. 170
To legal claims he yielded all his worth;
But small the portion, and the wrong'd were wroth,
Nor to their debtor would a part allow;
And where to live he knew not—knew not how.

The wife a cottage found, and thither went
The suppliant man, but she would not relent;
Thenceforth she utter'd with indignant tone,
"I feel the misery, and will feel alone."
He would turn servant for her sake, would keep 180
The poorest school; the very streets would sweep,
To show his love—"It was already shown,
"And her affliction should be all her own.
"His wants and weakness might have touch'd her heart,
"But from his meanness she resolved to part."

In a small alley was she lodged, beside
Its humblest poor, and at the view she cried:

GEORGE CRABBE

"Welcome—yes! let me welcome, if I can,
 "The fortune dealt me by this cruel man;
 "Welcome this low thatch'd roof, this shatter'd door, 190
 "These walls of clay, this miserable floor;
 "Welcome my envied neighbours; this, to you,
 "Is all familiar—all to me is new.
 "You have no hatred to the loathsome meal;
 "Your firmer nerves no trembling terrors feel,
 "Nor, what you must expose, desire you to conceal; }
 "What your coarse feelings bear without offence, []
 "Disgusts my taste, and poisons every sense.
 "Daily shall I your sad relations hear,
 "Of wanton women, and of men severe; 200
 "There will dire curses, dreadful oaths abound,
 "And vile expressions shock me and confound;
 "Noise of dull wheels, and songs with horrid words,
 "Will be the music that this lane affords;
 "Mirth that disgusts, and quarrels that degrade
 "The human mind, must my retreat invade.
 "Hard is my fate! yet easier to sustain,
 "Than to abide with guilt and fraud again,
 "A grave impostor—who expects to meet,
 "In such grey locks and gravity, deceit? 210
 "Where the sea rages, and the billows roar,
 "Men know the danger, and they quit the shore;
 "But, be there nothing in the way descried,
 "When o'er the rocks smooth runs the wicked tide—
 "Sinking unwarn'd, they execrate the shock,
 "And the dread peril of the sunken rock."

A frowning world had now the man to dread,
 Taught in no arts, to no profession bred;
 Pining in grief, beset with constant care,
 Wandering he went, to rest he knew not where. 220

Meantime the wife—but she abjured the name—
 Endured her lot, and struggled with the shame:
 When, lo! an uncle on the mother's side,
 In nature something, as in blood allied,
 Admired her firmness, his protection gave,
 And show'd a kindness she disdain'd to crave.

Frugal and rich the man, and frugal grew

RESENTMENT

The sister-mind, without a selfish view ;
And further still—the temp'rate pair agreed
With what they saved the patient poor to feed. 230
His whole estate, when to the grave consign'd,
Left the good kinsman to the kindred mind ;
Assured that law, with spell secure and tight,
Had fix'd it as her own peculiar right.

Now to her ancient residence removed,
She lived as widow, well endow'd and loved ;
Decent her table was, and to her door
Came daily welcomed the neglected poor.
The absent sick were soothed by her relief,
As her free bounty sought the haunts of grief ; 240
A plain and homely charity had she,
And loved the objects of her alms to see ;
With her own hands she dress'd the savoury meat,
With her own fingers wrote the choice receipt ;
She heard all tales that injured wives relate,
And took a double interest in their fate ;
But of all husbands not a wretch was known
So vile, so mean, so cruel, as her own.

This bounteous lady kept an active spy,
To search th' abodes of want, and to supply ; 250
The gentle Susan served the liberal dame—
Unlike their notions, yet their deeds the same :
No practised villain could a victim find,
Than this stern lady more completely blind ;
Nor (if detected in his fraud) could meet
One less disposed to pardon a deceit ;
The wrong she treasured, and on no pretence
Received th' offender, or forgot th' offence ;
But the kind servant, to the thrice-proved knave
A fourth time listen'd, and the past forgave. 260

First in her youth, when she was blithe and gay,
Came a smooth rogue, and stole her love away ;
Then to another and another flew,
To boast the wanton mischief he could do.
Yet she forgave him, though so great her pain,
That she was never blithe or gay again.

Then came a spoiler, who, with villain-art,

GEORGE CRABBE

Implored her hand, and agonized her heart ;
He seized her purse, in idle waste to spend
With a vile wanton, whom she call'd her friend ; 270
Five years she suffer'd—he had revell'd five—
Then came to show her he was just alive ;
Alone he came, his vile companion dead,
And he, a wand'ring pauper, wanting bread ;
His body wasted, wither'd life and limb,
When this kind soul became a slave to him.
Nay, she was sure that, should he now survive,
No better husband would be left alive ;
For him she mourn'd, and then, alone and poor,
Sought and found comfort at her lady's door : 280
Ten years she served, and, mercy her employ,
Her tasks were pleasure, and her duty joy.

Thus lived the mistress and the maid, design'd
Each other's aid—one cautious, and both kind.
Oft at their window, working, they would sigh
To see the aged and the sick go by ;
Like wounded bees, that at their home arrive,
Slowly and weak, but labouring for the hive.

The busy people of a mason's yard
The curious lady view'd with much regard ; 290
With steady motion she perceived them draw
Through blocks of stone the slowly-working saw ;
It gave her pleasure and surprise to see
Among these men the signs of revelry ;
Cold was the season, and confined their view,
Tedious their tasks, but merry were the crew.
There she beheld an aged pauper wait,
Patient and still, to take an humble freight ;
Within the panniers on an ass he laid
The ponderous grit, and for the portion paid ; 300
This he re-sold, and, with each trifling gift,
Made shift to live, and wretched was the shift.

Now will it be by every reader told
Who was this humble trader, poor and old.—
In vain an author would a name suppress,
From the least hint a reader learns to guess ;
Of children lost our novels sometimes treat ;

RESENTMENT

We never care—assured again to meet.
In vain the writer for concealment tries,
We trace his purpose under all disguise;
Nay, though he tells us they are dead and gone,
Of whom we wot—they will appear anon;
Our favourites fight, are wounded, hopeless lie;
Survive they cannot—nay, they cannot die:
Now, as these tricks and stratagems are known,
’Tis best, at once, the simple truth to own.

310

This was the husband—in an humble shed
He nightly slept, and daily sought his bread.
Once for relief the weary man applied;
“Your wife is rich,” the angry vestry cried;
Alas! he dared not to his wife complain,
Feeling her wrongs, and fearing her disdain:
By various methods he had tried to live,
But not one effort would subsistence give.
He was an usher in a school, till noise
Made him less able than the weaker boys;
On messages he went, till he in vain
Strove names, or words, or meanings to retain;
Each small employment in each neighbouring town
By turn he took, to lay as quickly down;
For, such his fate, he fail’d in all he plann’d,
And nothing prosper’d in his luckless hand.

320

330

At his old home, his motive half suppress’d,
He sought no more for riches, but for rest:
There lived the bounteous wife, and at her gate
He saw in cheerful groups the needy wait;
“Had he a right with bolder hope t’ apply?”
He ask’d—was answer’d, and went groaning by;
For some remains of spirit, temper, pride,
Forbade a prayer he knew would be denied.

340

Thus was the grieving man, with burthen’d ass,
Seen day by day along the street to pass:
“Who is he, Susan? who the poor old man?”
“He never calls—do make him, if you can.”—
The conscious damsel still delay’d to speak,
She stopp’d confused, and had her words to seek;
From Susan’s fears the fact her mistress knew,

237

GEORGE CRABBE

And cried—"The wretch ! what scheme has he in view ?

"Is this his lot?—but let him, let him feel—

"Who wants the courage, not the will to steal." 350

A dreadful winter came, each day severe,

Misty when mild, and icy cold when clear ;

And still the humble dealer took his load,

Returning slow, and shivering on the road :

The lady, still relentless, saw him come,

And said—"I wonder, has the wretch a home?"—

"A hut ! a hovel !"—"Then his fate appears

"To suit his crime ;"—"Yes, lady, not his years—

"No ! nor his sufferings—nor that form decay'd."—

"Well ! let the parish give its paupers aid ; 360

"You must the vileness of his acts allow."—

"And you, dear lady, that he feels it now."—

"When such dissemblers on their deeds reflect,

"Can they the pity they refused expect ?

"He that doth evil, evil shall he dread."—

"The snow," quoth Susan, "falls upon his bed—

"It blows beside the thatch—it melts upon his head."—

"'Tis weakness, child, for grieving guilt to feel."—

"Yes, but he never sees a wholesome meal ;

"Through his bare dress appears his shrivell'd skin, 370

"And ill he fares without, and worse within ;

"With that weak body, lame, diseased, and slow,

"What cold, pain, peril, must the sufferer know!"—

"Think on his crime."—"Yes, sure 'twas very wrong ;

"But look, (God bless him !) how he gropes along."—

"Brought me to shame."—"Oh ! yes, I know it all—

"What cutting blast ! and he can scarcely crawl ;

"He freezes as he moves—he dies ! if he should fall. }

"With cruel fierceness drives this icy sleet—

"And must a Christian perish in the street, 380

"In sight of Christians ?—There ! at last, he lies ;

"Nor unsupported can he ever rise :

"He cannot live."—"But is he fit to die?"—

Here Susan softly mutter'd a reply,

Look'd round the room—said something of its state,

Dives the rich, and Lazarus at his gate ;

And then, aloud—"In pity do behold

RESENTMENT

"The man affrighten'd, weeping, trembling, cold.
"Oh! how those flakes of snow their entrance win
"Through the poor rags, and keep the frost within; 390
"His very heart seems frozen as he goes,
"Leading that starved companion of his woes:
"He tried to pray—his lips, I saw them move,
"And he so turn'd his piteous looks above;
"But the fierce wind the willing heart opposed,
"And, ere he spoke, the lips in misery closed.
"Poor suffering object! yes, for ease you pray'd,
"And God will hear—he only, I'm afraid."

"Peace! Susan, peace! Pain ever follows sin."
"Ah! then," thought Susan, "when will ours begin? 400
"When reach'd his home, to what a cheerless fire
"And chilling bed will those cold limbs retire!
"Yet ragged, wretched as it is, that bed
"Takes half the space of his contracted shed;
"I saw the thorns beside the narrow grate,
"With straw collected in a putrid state.
"There will he, kneeling, strive the fire to raise,
"And that will warm him, rather than the blaze;
"The sullen, smoky blaze, that cannot last
"One moment after his attempt is past: 410
"And I so warmly and so purely laid,
"To sink to rest—indeed, I am afraid."
"Know you his conduct?"—"Yes, indeed, I know—
"And how he wanders in the wind and snow:
"Safe in our rooms the threat'ning storm we hear,
"But he feels strongly what we faintly fear."
"Wilful was rich, and he the storm defied;
"Wilful is poor, and must the storm abide;"
Said the stern lady;—" 'tis in vain to feel;
"Go and prepare the chicken for our meal." 420

Susan her task reluctantly began,
And utter'd as she went—"The poor old man!"—
But while her soft and ever-yielding heart
Made strong protest against her lady's part,
The lady's self began to think it wrong,
To feel so wrathful and resent so long.

"No more the wretch would she receive again,

GEORGE CRABBE

"No more behold him—but she would sustain ;
"Great his offence, and evil was his mind—
"But he had suffer'd, and she would be kind : 430
"She spurn'd such baseness, and she found within
"A fair acquittal from so foul a sin ;
"Yet she too err'd, and must of Heaven expect
"To be rejected, him should she reject."

Susan was summon'd—"I'm about to do
"A foolish act, in part seduced by you :
"Go to the creature—say that I intend,
"Foe to his sins, to be his sorrow's friend ;
"Take, for his present comforts, food and wine,
"And mark his feelings at this act of mine ; 440
"Observe if shame be o'er his features spread,
"By his own victim to be soothed and fed ;
"But, this inform him, that it is not love
"That prompts my heart, that duties only move.
"Say, that no merits in his favour plead,
"But miseries only, and his abject need ;
"Nor bring me grov'ling thanks, nor high-flown praise ;
"I would his spirits, not his fancy raise.
"Give him no hope that I shall ever more
"A man so vile to my esteem restore ; 450
"But warn him rather, that, in time of rest,
"His crimes be all remember'd and confess'd :
"I know not all that form the sinner's debt,
"But there is one that he must not forget."

The mind of Susan prompted her with speed
To act her part in every courteous deed :
All that was kind she was prepared to say,
And keep the lecture for a future day ;
When he had all life's comforts by his side,
Pity might sleep, and good advice be tried. 460

This done, the mistress felt disposed to look,
As self-approving, on a pious book :
Yet, to her native bias still inclined,
She felt her act too merciful and kind ;
But when, long musing on the chilling scene
So lately past—the frost and sleet so keen—
The man's whole misery in a single view—

RESENTMENT

Yes! she could think some pity was his due.

Thus fix'd, she heard not her attendant glide
With soft slow step—till, standing by her side,
The trembling servant gasp'd for breath, and shed
Relieving tears, then utter'd—"He is dead!" 470

"Dead!" said the startled lady; "Yes, he fell
"Close at the door where he was wont to dwell;
"There his sole friend, the ass, was standing by,
"Half-dead himself, to see his master die."

"Expired he then, good Heaven! for want of food?"—
"No! crusts and water in a corner stood;—

"To have this plenty, and to wait so long,
"And to be right too late, is doubly wrong: 480

"Then, every day to see him totter by,
"And to forbear—Oh! what a heart had I!"—

"Blame me not, child; I tremble at the news."—

"'Tis my own heart," said Susan, "I accuse:

"To have this money in my purse—to know

"What grief was his, and what to grief we owe;

"To see him often, always to conceive

"How he must pine and languish, groan and grieve;

"And every day in ease and peace to dine,

"And rest in comfort!—what a heart is mine!"— 490

TALE XVIII.

THE WAGER.

'Tis thought your deer doth hold you at a bay.
Taming [of] the Shrew, Act V. Scene 2.

I choose her for myself:
If she and I are pleased, what's that to you?
——, [Act II. Scene 1.]

Let's send each one to his wife,
And he whose wife is most obedient
[.]
Shall win the wager.
——, Act V. Scene 2.

Now by the world it is a lusty wench,
I love her ten times more than e'er I did.
——, Act II. Scene 1.

TALE XVIII.

THE WAGER.

COUNTER and CLUBB were men in trade, whose pains,
Credit, and prudence, brought them constant gains;
Partners and punctual, every friend agreed
Counter and Clubb were men who must succeed.
When they had fix'd some little time in life,
Each thought of taking to himself a wife;
As men in trade alike, as men in love
They seem'd with no according views to move;
As certain ores in outward view the same,
They show'd their difference when the magnet came. 10
Counter was vain; with spirit strong and high,
'Twas not in him like suppliant swain to sigh:
"His wife might o'er his men and maids preside,
"And in her province be a judge and guide;
"But what he thought, or did, or wish'd to do,
"She must not know, or censure if she knew;
"At home, abroad, by day, by night, if he
"On aught determin'd, so it was to be.
"How is a man," he ask'd, "for business fit,
"Who to a female can his will submit? 20
"Absent awhile, let no inquiring eye
"Or plainer speech presume to question why,
"But all be silent; and, when seen again,
"Let all be cheerful—shall a wife complain?
"Friends I invite, and who shall dare t' object,
"Or look on them with coolness or neglect?
"No! I must ever of my house be head,

GEORGE CRABBE

"And, thus obey'd, I condescend to wed."

Clubb heard the speech—"My friend is nice," said he ;

"A wife with less respect will do for me.

"How is he certain such a prize to gain?

"What he approves, a lass may learn to feign,

"And so affect t' obey till she begins to reign ;

"Awhile complying, she may vary then,

"And be as wives of more unwary men ;

"Beside, to him who plays such lordly part,

"How shall a tender creature yield her heart?

"Should he the promised confidence refuse,

"She may another more confiding choose ;

"May show her anger, yet her purpose hide,

"And wake his jealousy, and wound his pride.

"In one so humbled, who can trace the friend?

"I on an equal, not a slave, depend ;

"If true, my confidence is wisely placed,

"And, being false, she only is disgraced."

Clubb, with these notions, cast his eye around,

And one so easy soon a partner found.

The lady chosen was of good repute ;

Meekness she had not, and was seldom mute ;

Though quick to anger, still she loved to smile ;

And would be calm if men would wait awhile :

She knew her duty, and she loved her way,

More pleased in truth to govern than obey ;

She heard her priest with reverence, and her spouse

As one who felt the pressure of her vows.

Useful and civil, all her friends confess'd—

Give her her way, and she would choose the best ;

Though some indeed a sly remark would make—

Give it her not, and she would choose to take.

All this, when Clubb some cheerful months had spent, 60

He saw, confess'd, and said he was content.

Counter meantime selected, doubted, weigh'd,

And then brought home a young complying maid—

A tender creature, full of fears as charms,

A beauteous nursling from its mother's arms ;

A soft, sweet blossom, such as men must love,

But to preserve must keep it in the stove.

THE WAGER

She had a mild, subdued, expiring look—
Raise but the voice, and this fair creature shook ;
Leave her alone, she felt a thousand fears— 70
Chide, and she melted into floods of tears ;
Fondly she pleaded and would gently sigh,
For very pity, or she knew not why ;
One whom to govern none could be afraid—
Hold up the finger, this meek thing obey'd ;
Her happy husband had the easiest task—
Say but his will, no question would she ask ;
She sought no reasons, no affairs she knew,
Of business spoke not, and had nought to do.

Oft he exclaim'd, "How meek ! how mild ! how kind ! 80
"With her 'twere cruel but to seem unkind ;
"Though ever silent when I take my leave,
"It pains my heart to think how hers will grieve ;
"'Tis heaven on earth with such a wife to dwell,
"I am in raptures to have sped so well ;
"But let me not, my friend, your envy raise,
"No ! on my life, your patience has my praise."

His friend, though silent, felt the scorn implied—
"What need of patience ?" to himself he cried :
"Better a woman o'er her house to rule, 90
"Than a poor child just hurried from her school :
"Who has no care, yet never lives at ease ;
"Unfit to rule, and indisposed to please ;
"What if he govern, there his boast should end,
"No husband's power can make a slave his friend."

It was the custom of these friends to meet
With a few neighbours in a neighbouring street ;
Where Counter oft-times would occasion seize,
To move his silent friend by words like these :
"A man," said he, "if govern'd by his wife, 100
"Gives up his rank and dignity in life ;
"Now better fate befalls my friend and me."—
He spoke, and look'd th' approving smile to see.

The quiet partner, when he chose to speak,
Desired his friend, "another theme to seek ;
"When thus they met, he judged that state-affairs
"And such important subjects should be theirs."

GEORGE CRABBE

But still the partner, in his lighter vein,
 Would cause in Clubb affliction or disdain ;
 It made him anxious to detect the cause 110
 Of all that boasting—"Wants my friend applause ?
 "This plainly proves him not at perfect ease,
 "For, felt he pleasure, he would wish to please.—
 "These triumphs here for some regrets atone—
 "Men who are blest let other men alone."
 Thus made suspicious, he observed and saw
 His friend each night at early hour withdraw ;
 He sometimes mention'd Juliet's tender nerves,
 And what attention such a wife deserves.
 "In this," thought Clubb, "full sure some mystery lies—
 "He laughs at me, yet he with much complies, 121
 "And all his vaunts of bliss are proud apologies." []

With such ideas treasured in his breast,
 He grew composed, and let his anger rest ;
 Till Counter once (when wine so long went round
 That friendship and discretion both were drown'd)
 Began in teasing and triumphant mood
 His evening banter—"Of all earthly good,
 "The best," he said, "was an obedient spouse,
 "Such as my friend's—that every one allows : 130
 "What if she wishes his designs to know ?
 "It is because she would her praise bestow ;
 "What if she wills that he remains at home ?
 "She knows that mischief may from travel come.
 "I, who am free to venture where I please,
 "Have no such kind preventing checks as these ;
 "But mine is double duty, first to guide
 "Myself aright, then rule a house beside ;
 "While this our friend, more happy than the free,
 "Resigns all power, and laughs at liberty." 140

"By Heaven," said Clubb, "excuse me if I swear,
 "I'll bet a hundred guineas, if he dare,
 "That uncontroll'd I will such freedoms take,
 "That he will fear to equal—there's my stake."
 "A match !" said Counter, much by wine inflamed ;
 "But we are friends—let smaller stake be named :
 "Wine for our future meeting, that will I

THE WAGER

"Take and no more—what peril shall we try?"
"Let's to Newmarket," Clubb replied; "or choose
"Yourself the place, and what you like to lose;
"And he who first returns, or fears to go,
"Forfeits his cash."—Said Counter, "Be it so."

150

The friends around them saw with much delight
The social war, and hail'd the pleasant night;
Nor would they further hear the cause discuss'd,
Afraid the recreant heart of Clubb to trust.

Now sober thoughts return'd as each withdrew,
And of the subject took a serious view.

"'Twas wrong," thought Counter, "and will grieve my love;"
"'Twas wrong," thought Clubb, "my wife will not approve;
"But friends were present; I must try the thing,
"Or with my folly half the town will ring."

161

He sought his lady—"Madam, I'm to blame,
"But was reproach'd, and could not bear the shame;
"Here in my folly—for 'tis best to say

"The very truth—I've sworn to have my way:
"To that Newmarket—(though I hate the place,
"And have no taste or talents for a race,
"Yet so it is—well, now prepare to chide—)

"I laid a wager that I dared to ride;

170

"And I must go: by Heaven, if you resist
"I shall be scorn'd, and ridiculed, and hiss'd;
"Let me with grace before my friends appear,
"You know the truth, and must not be severe;
"He too must go, but that he will of course;
"Do you consent?—I never think of force."

"You never need," the worthy dame replied;
"The husband's honour is the woman's pride;
"If I in trifles be the wilful wife,

"Still for your credit I would lose my life;
"Go! and when fix'd the day of your return,
"Stay longer yet, and let the blockheads learn,
"That, though a wife may sometimes wish to rule,
"She would not make th' indulgent man a fool;
"I would at times advise—but idle they
"Who think th' assenting husband *must* obey."

180

The happy man, who thought his lady right

GEORGE CRABBE

In other cases, was assured to-night ;
Then for the day with proud delight prepared,
To show his doubting friends how much he dared. 190

Counter—who grieving sought his bed, his rest
Broken by pictures of his love distress'd—
With soft and winning speech the fair prepared :
“She all his councils, comforts, pleasures shared ;
“She was assured he loved her from his soul ;
“She never knew and need not fear control ;
“But so it happen'd—he was grieved at heart,
“It happen'd so, that they awhile must part—
“A little time—the distance was but short,
“And business call'd him—he despised the sport ; 200
“But to Newmarket he engaged to ride,
“With his friend Clubb ;” and there he stopp'd and sigh'd.

Awhile the tender creature look'd dismay'd,
Then floods of tears the call of grief obey'd :—
“She an objection ! No !” she sobb'd, “not one ;
“Her work was finish'd, and her race was run ;
“For die she must, indeed she would not live
“A week alone, for all the world could give ;
“He too must die in that same wicked place ;
“It always happen'd—was a common case ; 210
“Among those horrid horses, jockeys, crowds,
“'Twas certain death—they might bespeak their shrouds ;
“He would attempt a race, be sure to fall—
“And she expire with terror—that was all ;
“With love like hers she was indeed unfit
“To bear such horrors, but she must submit.”—

“But for three days, my love ! three days at most—”
“Enough for me ; I then shall be a ghost.—”
“My honour's pledged !”—“Oh ! yes, my dearest life,
“I know your honour must outweigh your wife ; 220
“But ere this absence, have you sought a friend—
“I shall be dead—on whom can you depend ?—
“Let me one favour of your kindness crave :
“Grant me the stone I mention'd for my grave.—”

“Nay, love, attend—why, bless my soul—I say
“I will return—there—weep no longer—nay !”—
“Well ! I obey, and to the last am true,

THE WAGER

"But spirits fail me ; I must die ; adieu !"

"What, madam ! must ?—'tis wrong—I'm angry—zounds !

"Can I remain and lose a thousand pounds ?" 230

"Go then, my love ! it is a monstrous sum,

"Worth twenty wives—go, love ! and I am dumb—

"Nor be displeased—[had] I the power to live,

"You might be angry, now you must forgive ;

"Alas ! I faint—ah ! cruel—there's no need

"Of wounds or fevers—this had done the deed."

The lady fainted, and the husband sent

For every aid, for every comfort went ;

Strong terror seized him ; "Oh ! she loved so well,

"And who th' effect of tenderness could tell ?" 240

She now recover'd, and again began

With accent querulous—"Ah ! cruel man—"

Till the sad husband, conscience-struck, confess'd,

'Twas very wicked with his friend to jest ;

For now he saw that those who were obey'd,

Could like the most subservient feel afraid ;

And, though a wife might not dispute the will

Of her liege lord, she could prevent it still.

The morning came, and Clubb prepared to ride

With a smart boy, his servant and his guide ; 250

When, ere he mounted on the ready steed,

Arrived a letter, and he stopp'd to read.

"My friend," he read—"our journey I decline:

"A heart too tender for such strife is mine ;

"Yours is the triumph, be you so inclined ;

"But you are too considerate and kind.

"In tender pity to my Juliet's fears

"I thus relent, o'ercome by love and tears ;

"She knows your kindness ; I have heard her say,

"A man like you 'tis pleasure to obey. 260

"Each faithful wife, like ours, must disapprove

"Such dangerous trifling with connubial love ;

"What has the idle world, my friend, to do

"With our affairs ? they envy me and you.

"What if I could my gentle spouse command—

"Is that a cause I should her tears withstand ?

"And what if you, a friend of peace, submit

GEORGE CRABBE

"To one you love—is that a theme for wit?
 "'Twas wrong; and I shall henceforth judge it weak
 "Both of submission and control to speak. 270
 "Be it agreed that all contention cease,
 "And no such follies vex our future peace;
 "Let each keep guard against domestic strife,
 "And find nor slave nor tyrant in his wife."
 "Agreed," said Clubb, "with all my soul agreed"—
 And to the boy, delighted, gave his steed;
 "I think my friend has well his mind express'd,
 "And I assent; such things are not a jest."
 "True," said the wife, "no longer he can hide
 "The truth that pains him by his wounded pride. 280
 "Your friend has found it not an easy thing,
 "Beneath his yoke this yielding soul to bring;
 "These weeping willows, though they seem inclined
 "By every breeze, yet not the strongest wind
 "Can from their bent divert this weak but stubborn kind; []
 "Drooping they seek your pity to excite,
 "But 'tis at once their nature and delight.
 "Such women feel not; while they sigh and weep,
 "'Tis but their habit—their affections sleep;
 "They are like ice that in the hand we hold, 290
 "So very melting, yet so very cold;
 "On such affection let not man rely:
 "The husbands suffer, and the ladies sigh.
 "But your friend's offer let us kindly take,
 "And spare his pride for his vexation's sake;
 "For he has found, and through his life will find,
 "'Tis easiest dealing with the firmest mind—
 "More just when it resists, and, when it yields, more kind." []

TALE XIX.

THE CONVERT.

A tapster is a good trade, an old cloak makes a new jerkin; a wither'd serving-man a fresh tapster.

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act I. Scene 3.

A fellow, sir, that I have known go about with [troll-my-dames].

Winter's Tale, Act IV. Scene [3.]

I myself, sometimes leaving the fear of Heaven on the left hand, and [hiding] mine honour in my necessity, am forced to shuffle, to hedge, and to lurch.

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act II. Scene 3.

Yea, and at that very moment,
Consideration like an angel came,
And whipp'd th' offending Adam out of him.

Henry V. Act I. Scene 1.

I have lived long enough: my May of life
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have.

Macbeth, Act V. Scene 3.

TALE XIX.

THE CONVERT.

SOME to our hero have a hero's name
Denied, because no father's he could claim ;
Nor could his mother with precision state
A full fair claim to her certificate ;
On her own word the marriage must depend—
A point she was not eager to defend.
But who, without a father's name, can raise
His own so high, deserves the greater praise :
The less advantage to the strife he brought,
The greater wonders has his prowess wrought ;
He who depends upon his wind and limbs,
Needs neither cork or bladder when he swims ;
Nor will by empty breath be puff'd along,
As not himself—but in his helpers—strong.

10

Suffice it then, our hero's name was clear,
For, call John Dighton, and he answer'd, " Here !"
But who that name in early life assign'd
He never found, he never tried to find ;
Whether his kindred were to John disgrace,
Or John to them, is a disputed case ;
His infant-state owed nothing to their care—
His mind neglected, and his body bare ;
All his success must on himself depend,
He had no money, counsel, guide, or friend ;
But, in a market-town, an active boy
Appear'd, and sought in various ways employ ;
Who soon, thus cast upon the world, began
To show the talents of a thriving man.

20

THE CONVERT

With spirit high John learn'd the world to brave,
And in both senses was a ready knave ; 30
Knave [as of] old, obedient, keen, and quick,
Knave as at present, skill'd to shift and trick.
Some humble part of many trades he caught:
He for the builder and the painter wrought ;
For serving-maids on secret errands ran,
The waiter's helper, and the hostler's man ;
And, when he chanced (oft chanced he) place to lose,
His varying genius shone in blacking shoes.
A midnight fisher by the pond he stood ;
Assistant poacher, he o'erlook'd the wood ; 40
At an election John's impartial mind
Was to no cause nor candidate confined ;
To all in turn he full allegiance swore,
And in his hat the various badges bore ;
His liberal soul with every sect agreed ;
Unheard their reasons, he received their creed.
At church he deign'd the organ-pipes to fill,
And at the meeting sang both loud and shrill ;
But the full purse these different merits gain'd,
By strong demands his lively passions drain'd ; 50
Liquors he loved of each inflaming kind,
To midnight revels flew with ardent mind ;
Too warm at cards, a losing game he play'd ;
To fleecing beauty his attention paid ;
His boiling passions were by oaths express'd,
And lies he made his profit and his jest.

Such was the boy, and such the man had been,
But fate or happier fortune changed the scene ;
A fever seized him ; "he should surely die—" 60
He fear'd, and lo ! a friend was praying by.
With terror moved, this teacher he address'd,
And all the errors of his youth confess'd :
The good man kindly clear'd the sinner's way
To lively hope, and counsell'd him to pray :
Who then resolved, should he from sickness rise,
To quit cards, liquors, poaching, oaths, and lies.
His health restored, he yet resolved, and grew
True to his masters, to their meeting true ;

GEORGE CRABBE

His old companions at his sober face
 Laugh'd loud, while he, attesting it was grace,
 With tears besought them all his calling to embrace. 70 }
 To his new friends such convert gave applause,
 Life to their zeal, and glory to their cause;
 Though terror wrought the mighty change, yet strong
 Was the impression, and it lasted long;
 John at the lectures due attendance paid,
 A convert meek, obedient, and afraid.
 His manners strict, though form'd on fear alone,
 Pleas'd the grave friends, nor less his solemn tone,
 The lengthen'd face of care, the low and inward groan. 80 }
 The stern good men exulted, when they saw
 Those timid looks of penitence and awe;
 Nor thought that one so passive, humble, meek,
 Had yet a creed and principles to seek.

The faith that reason finds, confirms, avows,
 The hopes, the views, the comforts she allows—
 These were not his, who by his feelings found,
 And by them only, that his faith was sound:
 Feelings of terror these, for evil past,
 Feelings of hope, to be received at last;
 Now weak, now lively, changing with the day,
 These were his feelings, and he felt his way.

Sprung from such sources, will this faith remain
 While these supporters can their strength retain?
 As heaviest weights the deepest rivers pass,
 While icy chains fast bind the solid mass:
 So, born of feelings, faith remains secure,
 Long as their firmness and their strength endure;
 But, when the waters in their channel glide,
 A bridge must bear us o'er the threat'ning tide;
 Such bridge is reason, and there faith relies,
 Whether the varying spirits fall or rise.

His patrons, still disposed their aid to lend,
 Behind a counter placed their humble friend;
 Where pens and paper were on shelves display'd,
 And pious pamphlets on the windows laid.
 By nature active, and from vice restrain'd,
 Increasing trade his bolder views sustain'd;

THE CONVERT

His friends and teachers, finding so much zeal
In that young convert whom they taught to feel,
His trade encouraged, and were pleased to find
A hand so ready, with such humble mind. 110

And now, his health restored, his spirits eased,
He wish'd to marry, if the teachers pleased.
They, not unwilling, from the virgin-class
Took him a comely and a courteous lass;
Simple and civil, loving and beloved,
She long a fond and faithful partner proved;
In every year the elders and the priest
Were duly summon'd to a christening feast; 120
Nor came a babe, but by his growing trade,
John had provision for the coming made;
For friends and strangers all were pleased to deal
With one whose care was equal to his zeal.

In human friendships, it compels a sigh,
To think what trifles will dissolve the tie.
John, now become a master of his trade,
Perceived how much improvement might be made;
And, as this prospect open'd to his view,
A certain portion of his zeal withdrew; 130
His fear abated—"What had he to fear—
"His profits certain, and his conscience clear?"
Above his door a board was placed by John,
And "Dighton, stationer," was gilt thereon;
His window next, enlarged to twice the size,
Shone with such trinkets as the simple prize;
While in the shop with pious works were seen
The last new play, review, or magazine.
In orders punctual, he observed—"The books
"He never read, and could he judge their looks? 140
"Readers and critics should their merits try,
"He had no office but to sell and buy;
"Like other traders, profit was his care;
"Of what they print, the authors must beware."
He held his patrons and his teachers dear,
But with his trade—they must not interfere.

'Twas certain now that John had lost the dread
And pious thoughts that once such terrors bred;

GEORGE CRABBE

His habits varied, and he more inclined
To the vain world, which he had half resign'd : 150
He had moreover in his brethren seen,
Or he imagined, craft, conceit, and spleen ;
"They are but men," said John, "and shall I then
"Fear man's control, or stand in awe of men ?
"'Tis their advice (their convert's rule and law),
"And good it is—I will not stand in awe."

Moreover Dighton, though he thought of books
As one who chiefly on the title looks,
Yet sometimes ponder'd o'er a page to find,
When vex'd with cares, amusement for his mind ; 160
And by degrees that mind had treasured much
From works his teachers were afraid to touch.
Satiric novels, poets bold and free,
And what their writers term philosophy,
All these were read ; and he began to feel
Some self-approval on his bosom steal.
Wisdom creates humility, but he
Who thus collects it, will not humble be.
No longer John was fill'd with pure delight
And humble reverence in a pastor's sight, 170
Who, like a grateful zealot, listening stood,
To hear a man so friendly and so good ;
But felt the dignity of one who made
Himself important by a thriving trade ;
And growing pride in Dighton's mind was bred
By the strange food on which it coarsely fed.

Their brother's fall the grieving brethren heard,
The pride indeed to all around appear'd ;
The world, his friends agreed, had won the soul
From its best hopes, the man from their control. 180
To make him humble, and confine his views
Within their bounds, and books which they peruse,
A deputation from these friends select,
Might reason with him to some good effect ;
Arm'd with authority, and led by love,
They might those follies from his mind remove ;
Deciding thus, and with this kind intent,
A chosen body with its speaker went.

THE CONVERT

“John,” said the teacher, “John, with great concern
“We see thy frailty, and thy fate discern— 190
“Satan with toils thy simple soul beset,
“And thou art careless, slumbering in the net;
“Unmindful art thou of thy early vow;
“Who at the morning-meeting sees thee now?
“Who at the evening? where is brother John?
“We ask—are answer’d, ‘To the tavern gone.’
“Thee on the sabbath seldom we behold;
“Thou canst not sing, thou’rt nursing for a cold:
“This from the churchmen thou hast learn’d, for they
“Have colds and fevers on the sabbath-day; 200
“When in some snug warm room they sit, and pen
“Bills from their ledgers, world-entangled men!
“See with what pride thou hast enlarged thy shop;
“To view thy tempting stores the heedless stop;
“By what strange names dost thou these baubles know,
“Which wantons wear, to make a sinful show?
“Hast thou in view these idle volumes placed
“To be the pander of a vicious taste?
“What’s here? a book of dances!—you advance
“In goodly knowledge—John, wilt learn to dance? 210
“How! ‘Go—’ it says, and ‘to the devil go!
“‘And shake thyself!’ I tremble—but ’tis so—
“Wretch as thou art, what answer canst thou make?
“Oh! without question, thou wilt go and shake.
“What’s here? ‘The School for Scandal’—pretty schools!
“Well, and art thou proficient in the rules?
“Art thou a pupil, is it thy design
“To make our names contemptible as thine?
“‘Old Nick, a Novel!’ oh! ’tis mighty well—
“A fool has courage when he laughs at hell; 220
“‘Frolic and Fun,’ ‘The humours of Tim Grin’;
“Why, John, thou grow’st facetious in thy sin;
“And what? ‘The Archdeacon’s Charge’—’tis mighty well—
“If Satan publish’d, thou wouldst doubtless sell;
“Jests, novels, dances, and this precious stuff—
“To crown thy folly we have seen enough;
“We find thee fitted for each evil work—
“Do print the Koran, and become a Turk!

GEORGE CRABBE

"John, thou art lost; success and worldly pride
 "O'er all thy thoughts and purposes preside,
 "Have bound thee fast, and drawn thee far aside;
 "Yet turn, these sin-traps from thy shop expel,
 "Repent and pray, and all may yet be well.
 "And here thy wife, thy Dorothy, behold,
 "How fashion's wanton robes her form infold!
 "Can grace, can goodness with such trappings dwell?
 "John, thou hast made thy wife a Jezebel.
 "See! on her bosom rests the sign of sin,
 "The glaring proof of naughty thoughts within;
 "What? 'tis a cross; come hither—as a friend,
 "Thus from thy neck the shameful badge I rend."
 "Rend, if you dare," said Dighton; "you shall find
 "A man of spirit, though to peace inclined;
 "Call me ungrateful! have I not my pay
 "At all times ready for the expected day?—
 "To share my plenteous board you deign to come,
 "Myself your pupil, and my house your home;
 "And shall the persons who my meat enjoy
 "Talk of my faults, and treat me as a boy?
 "Have you not told how Rome's insulting priests
 "Led their meek laymen like a herd of beasts;
 "And by their fleecing and their forgery made
 "Their holy calling an accursed trade?
 "Can you such acts and insolence condemn,
 "Who to your utmost power resemble them?
 "Concerns it you what books I set for sale?
 "The tale perchance may be a virtuous tale;
 "And, for the rest, 'tis neither wise nor just
 "In you, who read not, to condemn on trust;
 "Why should th' Archdeacon's Charge your spleen excite?
 "He, or perchance th' archbishop, may be right.
 "That from your meetings I refrain, is true;
 "I meet with nothing pleasant—nothing new,
 "But the same proofs, that not one text explain,
 "And the same lights, where all things dark remain;
 "I thought you saints on earth—but I have found
 "Some sins among you, and the best unsound;
 "You have your failings, like the crowds below,

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THE CONVERT

"And at your pleasure hot and cold can blow.
"When I at first your grave deportment saw, 270
"(I own my folly,) I was fill'd with awe;
"You spoke so warmly, and it [seemed] so well,
"I should have thought it treason to rebel.
"Is it a wonder that a man like me
"Should such perfection in such teachers see;
"Nay, should conceive you sent from Heav'n to brave
"The host of sin, and sinful souls to save?
"But, as our reason wakes, our prospects clear,
"And failings, flaws, and blemishes appear.
"When you were mounted in your rostrum high, 280
"We shrank beneath your tone, your frown, your eye;
"Then you beheld us abject, fallen, low,
"And felt your glory from our baseness grow;
"Touch'd by your words, I trembled like the rest,
"And my own vileness and your power confess'd:
"These, I exclaim'd, are men divine, and gazed
"On him who taught, delighted and amazed;
"Glad, when he finish'd, if by chance he cast
"One look on such a sinner, as he pass'd.
"But, when I view'd you in a clearer light, 290
"And saw the frail and carnal appetite;
"When, at his humble pray'r, you deign'd to eat,
"Saints as you are, a civil sinner's meat;
"When, as you sat contented and at ease,
"Nibbling at leisure on the ducks and peas,
"And, pleased some comforts in such place to find,
"You could descend to be a little kind;
"And gave us hope, in Heaven there might be room
"For a few souls beside your own to come;
"While this world's good engaged your carnal view, 300
"And like a sinner you enjoy'd it too:
"All this perceiving, can you think it strange
"That change in you should work an equal change?"
"Wretch that thou art," an elder cried, "and gone
"For everlasting"—"Go thyself," said John;
"Depart this instant, let me hear no more;
"My house my castle is, and that my door."
The hint they took, and from the door withdrew,

GEORGE CRABBE

And John to meeting bade a long adieu ;
Attach'd to business, he in time became 310
A wealthy man of no inferior name.
It seem'd, alas ! in John's deluded sight,
That all was wrong because not all was right ;
And, when he found his teachers had their stains,
Resentment and not reason broke his chains.
Thus on his feelings he again relied,
And never look'd to reason for his guide.
Could he have wisely view'd the frailty shown,
And rightly weigh'd their wanderings and his own,
He might have known that men may be sincere, 320
Though gay and feasting on the savoury cheer ;
That doctrines sound and sober they may teach,
Who love to eat with all the glee they preach ;
Nay, who believe the duck, the grape, the pine,
Were not intended for the dog and swine.
But Dighton's hasty mind on every theme
Ran from the truth, and rested in th' extreme ;
Flaws in his friends he found, and then withdrew
(Vain of his knowledge) from their virtues too ;
Best of his books he loved the liberal kind, 330
That, if they improve not, still enlarge the mind ;
And found himself, with such advisers, free
From a fix'd creed, as mind enlarged could be.
His humble wife at these opinions sigh'd,
But her he never heeded till she died ;
He then assented to a last request,
And by the meeting-window let her rest ;
And on her stone the sacred text was seen,
Which had her comfort in departing been.
Dighton with joy beheld his trade advance, 340
Yet seldom published, loth to trust to chance ;
Then wed a doctor's sister—poor indeed,
But skill'd in works her husband could not read ;
Who, if he wish'd new ways of wealth to seek,
Could make her half-crown pamphlet in a week :
This he rejected, though without disdain,
And chose the old and certain way to gain.
Thus he proceeded ; trade increased the while,

THE CONVERT

And fortune woo'd him with perpetual smile.
On early scenes he sometimes cast a thought, 350
When on his heart the mighty change was wrought ;
And all the ease and comfort converts find
Was magnified in his reflecting mind ;
Then on the teacher's priestly pride he dwelt,
That caused his freedom, but with this he felt
The danger of the free—for since that day,
No guide had shown, no brethren join'd his way ;
Forsaking one, he found no second creed,
But reading doubted, doubting what to read.

Still, though reproof had brought some present pain, 360
The gain he made was fair and honest gain ;
He laid his wares indeed in public view,
But that all traders claim a right to do.
By means like these, he saw his wealth increase,
And felt his consequence, and dwelt in peace.

Our hero's age was threescore years and five,
When he exclaim'd, "Why longer should I strive ?
"Why more amass, who never must behold
"A young John Dighton to make glad the old ?"
(The sons he had to early graves were gone, 370
And girls were burdens to the mind of John.)
"Had I [a] boy, he would our name sustain,
"That now to nothing must return again ;
"But what are all my profits, credit, trade,
"And parish-honours ?—folly and parade."

Thus Dighton thought, and in his looks appear'd
Sadness, increased by much he saw and heard.
The brethren often at the shop would stay,
And make their comments ere they walk'd away ;
They mark'd the window, fill'd in every pane 380
With lawless prints of reputations slain ;
Distorted forms of men with honours graced,
And our chief rulers in derision placed :
Amazed they stood, remembering well the days,
When to be humble was their brother's praise ;
When at the dwelling of their friend they stopp'd
To drop a word, or to receive it dropp'd ;
Where they beheld the prints of men renown'd,

GEORGE CRABBE

And far-famed preachers pasted all around ;
 (Such mouths ! eyes ! hair ! so prim ! so fierce ! so sleek ! 390
 They look'd as speaking what is wo to speak):
 On these the passing brethren loved to dwell—
 How long they spake ! how strongly ! warmly ! well !
 What power had each to dive in mysteries deep,
 To warm the cold, to make the harden'd weep ;
 To lure, to fright, to soothe, to awe the soul,
 And list'ning flocks to lead and to control !

But now discoursing, as they linger'd near,
 They tempted John (whom they accused) to hear
 Their weighty charge—"And can the lost-one feel, 400
 "As in the time of duty, love, and zeal:
 "When all were summon'd at the rising sun,
 "And he was ready with his friends to run ;
 "When he, partaking with a chosen few,
 "Felt the great change, sensation rich and new ?
 "No ! all is lost, her favours Fortune shower'd
 "Upon the man, and he is overpower'd ;
 "The world has won him with its tempting store
 "Of needless wealth, and that has made him poor.
 "Success undoes him ; he has risen to fall, 410
 "Has gain'd a fortune, and has lost his all ;
 "Gone back from Sion, he will find his age
 "Loth to commence a second pilgrimage ;
 "He has retreated from the chosen track ;
 "And now must ever bear the burden on his back."

Hurt by such censure, John began to find
 Fresh revolutions working in his mind ;
 He sought for comfort in his books, but read
 Without a plan or method in his head ;
 What once amused, now rather made him sad, 420
 What should inform, increased the doubts he had ;
 Shame would not let him seek at church a guide,
 And from his meeting he was held by pride ;
 His wife derided fears she never felt,
 And passing brethren daily censures dealt ;
 Hope for a son was now for ever past,
 He was the first John Dighton, and the last ;
 His stomach fail'd, his case the doctor knew,

THE CONVERT

But said, "he still might hold a year or two."
"No more?" he said, "but why should I complain? 430
"A life of doubt must be a life of pain.
"Could I be sure—but why should I despair?
"I'm sure my conduct has been just and fair;
"In youth indeed I had a wicked will,
"But I repented, and have sorrow still;
"I had my comforts, and a growing trade
"Gave greater pleasure than a fortune made;
"And, as I more possess'd and reason'd more,
"I lost those comforts I enjoy'd before,
"When reverend guides I saw my table round, 440
"And in my guardian guest my safety found.
"Now sick and sad, no appetite, no ease,
"Nor pleasure have I, nor a wish to please;
"Nor views, nor hopes, nor plans, nor taste have I,
"Yet sick of life, have no desire to die."

He said, and died; his trade, his name is gone,
And all that once gave consequence to John.

Unhappy Dighton! had he found a friend,
When conscience told him it was time to mend!
A friend discreet, considerate, kind, sincere, 450
Who would have shown the grounds of hope and fear;
And proved that spirits, whether high or low,
No certain tokens of man's safety show;
Had reason ruled him in her proper place,
And virtue led him while he lean'd on grace;
Had he while zealous been discreet and pure,
His knowledge humble, and his hope secure—
These guides had placed him on the solid rock,
Where faith had rested, nor received a shock;
But his, alas! was placed upon the sand, 460
Where long it stood not, and where none can stand.

TALE XX.

THE BROTHERS.

A brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My [practices] ride easy.

King Lear, Act I. Scene 2.

He lets me feed with [his] hinds; bars me the place of brother.
As You Like It, Act I. Scene 1.

'Twas I, but 'tis not I: I do not shame
To tell you what I was, [. . .]
[. . .] being [the thing] I am.

As You Like It, Act IV. Scene 3.

TALE XX.

THE BROTHERS.

THAN old George Fletcher on the British coast
Dwelt not a seaman who had more to boast :
Kind, simple, and sincere—he seldom spoke,
But sometimes sang and chorus'd "*Hearts of Oak* ;"
In dangers steady, with his lot content,
His days in labour and in love were spent.

He left a son so like him, that the old
With joy exclaim'd, "'Tis Fletcher we behold ;"
But to his brother when the kinsmen came,
And view'd his form, they grudged the father's name. 10

George was a bold, intrepid, careless lad,
With just the failings that his father had ;
Isaac was weak, attentive, slow, exact,
With just the virtues that his father lack'd.

George lived at sea : upon the land a guest—
He sought for recreation, not for rest—
While, far unlike, his brother's feebler form
Shrank from the cold, and shudder'd at the storm ;
Still with the seaman's to connect his trade,
The boy was bound where blocks and ropes were made. 20

George, strong and sturdy, had a tender mind,
And was to Isaac pitiful and kind ;
A very father, till his art was gain'd,
And then a friend unwearied he remain'd.
He saw his brother was of spirit low,
His temper peevish, and his motions slow ;
Not fit to bustle in a world, or make

GEORGE CRABBE

Friends to his fortune for his merit's sake :
But the kind sailor could not boast the art
Of looking deeply in the human heart ; 30
Else had he seen that this weak brother knew
What men to court—what objects to pursue ;
That he to distant gain the way discern'd,
And none so crooked but his genius learn'd.

Isaac was poor, and this the brother felt ;
He hired a house, and there the landman dwelt ;
Wrought at his trade, and had an easy home,
For there would George with cash and comforts come ;
And, when they parted, Isaac look'd around,
Where other friends and helpers might be found. 40

He wish'd for some port-place, and one might fall,
He wisely thought, if he should try for all ;
He had a vote—and, were it well applied,
Might have its worth—and he had views beside ;
Old Burgess Steel was able to promote
An humble man who served him with a vote ;
For Isaac felt not what some tempers feel,
But bow'd and bent the neck to Burgess Steel ;
And great attention to a lady gave,
His ancient friend, a maiden spare and grave : 50
One whom the visage long and look demure
Of Isaac pleased—he seem'd sedate and pure ;
And his soft heart conceived a gentle flame
For her who waited on this virtuous dame :
Not an outrageous love, a scorching fire,
But friendly liking and chastised desire ;
And thus he waited, patient in delay,
In present favour and in fortune's way.

George then was coasting—war was yet delay'd,
And what he gain'd was to his brother paid ; 60
Nor ask'd the seaman what he saved or spent :
But took his grog, wrought hard, and was content ;
Till war awaked the land, and George began
To think what part became a useful man :
“ Press'd, I must go ; why, then, 'tis better far
“ At once to enter like a British tar,
“ Than a brave captain and the foe to shun,

THE BROTHERS

"As if I fear'd the music of a gun."
 "Go not!" said Isaac—"You shall wear disguise."
 "What!" said the seaman, "clothe myself with lies?"— 70
 "Oh! but there's danger."—"Danger in the fleet?"
 "You cannot mean, good brother, of defeat;
 "And other dangers I at land must share—
 "So now adieu! and trust a brother's care."

Isaac awhile demurr'd—but, in his heart,
 So might he share, he was disposed to part:
 The better mind will sometimes feel the pain
 Of benefactions—favour is a chain;
 But they the feeling scorn, and what they wish, disdain;— }
 While beings form'd in coarser mould will hate 80
 The helping hand they ought to venerate.
 No wonder George should in this cause prevail,
 With one contending who was glad to fail:
 "Isaac, farewell! do wipe that doleful eye;
 "Crying we came, and groaning we may die.
 "Let us do something 'twixt the groan and cry: }
 "And hear me, brother, whether pay or prize, }
 "One half to thee I give and I devise;
 "For thou hast oft occasion for the aid
 "Of learn'd physicians, and they will be paid: 90
 "Their wives and children men support, at sea,
 'And thou, my lad, art wife and child to me:
 'Farewell!—I go where hope and honour call,
 "Nor does it follow that who fights must fall."

Isaac here made a poor attempt to speak,
 And a huge tear moved slowly down his cheek;
 Like Pluto's iron drop, hard sign of grace,
 It slowly roll'd upon the rueful face,
 Forced by the striving will alone its way to trace. }
 Years fled—war lasted—George at sea remain'd, 100
 While the slow landman still his profits gain'd.
 A humble place was vacant—he besought
 His patron's interest, and the office caught;
 For still the virgin was his faithful friend,
 And one so sober could with truth commend,
 Who of his own defects most humbly thought,
 And their advice with zeal and reverence sought.

GEORGE CRABBE

Whom thus the mistress praised, the maid approved,
And her he wedded whom he wisely loved.

No more he needs assistance—but, alas ! 110
He fears the money will for liquor pass ;
Or that the seaman might to flatterers lend,
Or give support to some pretended friend.
Still, he must write—he wrote, and he confess'd
That, till absolved, he should be sore distress'd ;
But one so friendly would, he thought, forgive
The hasty deed—Heav'n knew how he should live ;
“But you,” he added, “as a man of sense,
“Have well consider'd danger and expense :
“I ran, alas ! into the fatal snare, 120
“And now for trouble must my mind prepare ;
“And how, with children, I shall pick my way,
“Through a hard world, is more than I can say :
“Then change not, brother, your more happy state,
“Or on the hazard long deliberate.”

George answer'd gravely, “It is right and fit,
“In all our crosses, humbly to submit :
“Your apprehensions are unwise, unjust ;
“Forbear repining, and expel distrust.”— 130
He added, “Marriage was the joy of life,”
And gave his service to his brother's wife ;
Then vow'd to bear in all expense a part,
And thus concluded, “Have a cheerful heart.”

Had the glad Isaac been his brother's guide,
In these same terms the seaman had replied ;
At such reproofs the crafty landman smiled,
And softly said—“This creature is a child.”

Twice had the gallant ship a capture made—
And when in port the happy crew were paid,
Home went the sailor, with his pocket stored, 140
Ease to enjoy, and pleasure to afford.
His time was short ; joy shone in every face ;
Isaac half fainted in the fond embrace ;
The wife resolved her honour'd guest to please,
The children clung upon their uncle's knees ;
The grog went round, the neighbours drank his health,
And George exclaim'd—“Ah ! what to this is wealth ?

THE BROTHERS

"Better," said he, "to bear a loving heart,
"Than roll in riches—but we now must part!"

All yet is still—but hark! the winds o'ersweep 150
The rising waves, and howl upon the deep;
Ships, late becalm'd, on mountain-billows ride—
So life is threaten'd, and so man is tried.

Ill were the tidings that arrived from sea:
The worthy George must now a cripple be;
His leg was lopp'd; and, though his heart was sound,
Though his brave captain was with glory crown'd—
Yet much it vex'd him to repose on shore,
An idle log, and be of use no more.

True, he was sure that Isaac would receive 160
All of his brother that the foe might leave;
To whom the seaman his design had sent,
Ere from the port the wounded hero went;
His wealth and expectations told, he "knew
"Wherein they fail'd, what Isaac's love would do;
"That he the grog and cabin would supply,
"Where George at anchor during life would lie."

The landman read—and, reading, grew distress'd:—
"Could he resolve t' admit so poor a guest?
"Better at Greenwich might the sailor stay, 170
"Unless his purse could for his comforts pay;"
So Isaac judged, and to his wife appeal'd,
But yet acknowledged it was best to yield:
"Perhaps his pension, with what sums remain
"Due or unsquander'd, may the man maintain;
"Refuse we must not."—With a heavy sigh
The lady heard, and made her kind reply:
"Nor would I wish it, Isaac, were we sure
"How long his crazy building will endure;
"Like an old house, that every day appears 180
"About to fall—he may be propp'd for years;
"For a few months, indeed, we might comply,
"But these old batter'd fellows never die."

The hand of Isaac George on entering took,
With love and resignation in his look;
Declared his comfort in the fortune past,
And joy to find his anchor safely cast;

GEORGE CRABBE

"Call then my nephews, let the grog be brought,
 "And I will tell them how the ship was fought."

Alas! our simple seaman should have known, 190
 That all the care, the kindness, he had shown,
 Were from his brother's heart, if not his memory, flown : []
 All swept away to be perceived no more,
 Like idle structures on the sandy shore ;
 The chance amusement of the playful boy,
 That the rude billows in their rage destroy.

Poor George confess'd, though loth the truth to find,
 Slight was his knowledge of a brother's mind :
 The vulgar pipe was to the wife offence,
 The frequent grog to Isaac an expense ; 200
 "Would friends like hers," she question'd, "choose to come,
 "Where clouds of poison'd fume defiled a room ?
 "This could their lady-friend, and Burgess Steel,
 "(Teased with his worship's asthma) bear to feel ?
 "Could they associate or converse with him—
 "A loud rough sailor with a timber limb ?"

Cold as he grew, still Isaac strove to show,
 By well-feign'd care, that cold he could not grow ;
 And when he saw his brother look distress'd,
 He strove some petty comforts to suggest ; 210
 On his wife solely their neglect to lay,
 And then t' excuse it as a woman's way ;
 He too was chidden when her rules he broke,
 And then she sicken'd at the scent of smoke.

George, though in doubt, was still consoled to find
 His brother wishing to be reckon'd kind.
 That Isaac seem'd concern'd by his distress,
 Gave to his injured feelings some redress ;
 But none he found disposed to lend an ear
 To stories all were once intent to hear ; 220
 Except his nephew, seated on his knee,
 He found no creature cared about the sea ;
 But George indeed—for George they call'd the boy,
 When his good uncle was their boast and joy—
 Would listen long, and would contend with sleep,
 To hear the woes and wonders of the deep ;
 Till the fond mother cried—"That man will teach

THE BROTHERS

"The foolish boy his loud and boisterous speech."

So judged the father—and the boy was taught
To shun the uncle, whom his love had sought.

230

The mask of kindness now but seldom worn,
George felt each evil harder to be borne;
And cried (vexation growing day by day),
"Ah! brother Isaac!—What! I'm in the way!"—
"No! on my credit, look ye, No! but I
"Am fond of peace, and my repose would buy
"On any terms—in short, we must comply:
"My spouse had money—she must have her will—
"Ah! brother—marriage is a bitter pill."

}
[]

George tried the lady—"Sister, I offend"—
"Me?" she replied; "Oh no!—you may depend
"On my regard—but watch your brother's way,
"Whom I, like you, must study and obey."

240

"Ah!" thought the seaman, "what a head was mine,
"That easy birth at Greenwich to resign!
"I'll to the parish"—but a little pride,
And some affection, put the thought aside.

Now gross neglect and open scorn he bore
In silent sorrow—but he felt the more;
The odious pipe he to the kitchen took,
Or strove to profit by some pious book.

250

When the mind stoops to this degraded state,
New griefs will darken the dependent's fate;
"Brother!" said Isaac, "you will sure excuse
"The little freedom I'm compell'd to use:
"My wife's relations—(curse the haughty crew)—
"Affect such niceness, and such dread of you:
"You speak so loud—and they have natures soft—
"Brother—I wish—do go upon the loft!"

Poor George obey'd, and to the garret fled,
Where not a being saw the tears he shed.
But more was yet required, for guests were come,
Who could not dine if he disgraced the room.
It shock'd his spirit to be esteem'd unfit
With an own brother and his wife to sit;
He grew rebellious—at the vestry spoke
For weekly aid—they heard it as a joke:

260

GEORGE CRABBE

"So kind a brother, and so wealthy—you
"Apply to us?—No! this will never do:
"Good neighbour Fletcher," said the overseer,
"We are engaged—you can have nothing here!"

270

George mutter'd something in despairing tone,
Then sought his loft, to think and grieve alone;
Neglected, slighted, restless on his bed,
With heart half broken, and with scraps ill fed;
Yet was he pleased that hours for play design'd
Were given to ease his ever-troubled mind;
The child still listen'd with increasing joy,
And he was soothed by the attentive boy.

At length he sicken'd, and this duteous child
Watch'd o'er his sickness, and his pains beguiled;
The mother bade him from the loft refrain,
But, though with caution, yet he went again;
And now his tales the sailor feebly told,
His heart was heavy, and his limbs were cold:
The tender boy came often to entreat
His good kind friend would of his presents eat,
Purloin'd or purchased; for he saw, with shame,
The food untouch'd that to his uncle came:
Who, sick in body and in mind, received
The boy's indulgence, gratified and grieved.

280

290

"Uncle will die!" said George—the piteous wife
Exclaim'd, "she saw no value in his life;
"But sick or well, to my commands attend,
"And go no more to your complaining friend."
The boy was vex'd, he felt his heart reprove
The stern decree.—What! punish'd for his love!
No! he would go, but softly, to the room
Stealing in silence—for he knew his doom.

Once in a week the father came to say,
"George, are you ill?"—and hurried him away;
Yet to his wife would on their duties dwell,
And often cry, "Do use my brother well;"
And something kind, no question, Isaac meant,
Who took vast credit for the vague intent.

300

But, truly kind, the gentle boy essay'd
To cheer his uncle, firm, although afraid;

THE BROTHERS

But now the father caught him at the door,
And, swearing—yes, the man in office swore,
And cried, “Away! How! Brother, I’m surprised, 310
“That one so old can be so ill advised.

“Let him not dare to visit you again,
“Your cursed stories will disturb his brain;
“Is it not vile to court a foolish boy,
“Your own absurd narrations to enjoy?
“What! sullen!—ha! George Fletcher? you shall see,
“Proud as you are, your bread depends on me!”

He spoke, and, frowning, to his dinner went,
Then cool’d and felt some qualms of discontent;
And thought on times when he compell’d his son 320
To hear these stories, nay, to beg for one;
But the wife’s wrath o’ercame the brother’s pain,
And shame was felt, and conscience rose in vain.

George yet stole up—he saw his uncle lie
Sick on the bed, and heard his heavy sigh:
So he resolved, before he went to rest,
To comfort one so dear and so distress’d;
Then watch’d his time, but, with a child-like art,
Betray’d a something treasured at his heart.
Th’ observant wife remark’d, “the boy is grown 330
“So like your brother, that he seems his own;
“So close and sullen! and I still suspect
“They often meet—do watch them and detect.”

George now remark’d that all was still as night,
And hasten’d up with terror and delight;
“Uncle!” he cried, and softly tapp’d the door;
“Do let me in”—but he could add no more;
The careful father caught him in the fact,
And cried, “You serpent! is it thus you act?
“Back to your mother!” and, with hasty blow, 340
He sent th’ indignant boy to grieve below;
Then at the door an angry speech began:
“Is this your conduct—is it thus you plan?
“Seduce my child, and make my house a scene
“Of vile dispute—What is it that you mean?—
“George, are you dumb? do learn to know your friends,
“And think awhile on whom your bread depends.—

GEORGE CRABBE

"What! not a word? be thankful I am cool;
 "But, sir, beware, nor longer play the fool.—
 "Come! brother, come! what is that you seek 350
 "By this rebellion?—Speak, you villain, speak!—
 "Weeping! I warrant, sorrow makes you dumb;
 "I'll ope your mouth, impostor! if I come.
 "Let me approach—I'll shake you from the bed,
 "You stubborn dog——Oh God! my brother's dead!—"

Timid was Isaac, and in all the past
 He felt a purpose to be kind at last;
 Nor did he mean his brother to depart,
 Till he had shown this kindness of his heart:
 But day by day he put the cause aside, 360
 Induced by av'rice, peevishness, or pride.

But, now awaken'd, from this fatal time
 His conscience Isaac felt, and found his crime:
 He raised to George a monumental stone,
 And there retired to sigh and think alone;
 An ague seized him, he grew pale, and shook—
 "So," said his son, "would my poor uncle look."—
 "And so, my child, shall I like him expire."—
 "No! you have physic and a cheerful fire."—
 "Unhappy sinner! yes, I'm well supplied 370
 "With every comfort my cold heart denied."
 He view'd his brother now, but not as one
 Who vex'd his wife by fondness for her son;
 Not as with wooden limb, and seaman's tale,
 The odious pipe, vile grog, or humbler ale:
 He now the worth and grief alone can view
 Of one so mild, so generous, and so true:
 "The frank, kind brother, with such open heart,
 "And I to break it——'twas a dæmon's part!"

So Isaac now, as led by conscience, feels, 380
 Nor his unkindness palliates or conceals.
 "This is your folly," said his heartless wife;
 "Alas! my folly cost my brother's life:
 "It suffer'd him to languish and decay,
 "My gentle brother, whom I could not pay,
 "And therefore left to pine, and fret his life away." }

He takes his son, and bids the boy unfold

THE BROTHERS

All the good uncle of his feelings told,
 All he lamented—and the ready tear
 Falls as he listens, soothed and grieved to hear. 390

“Did he not curse me, child?”—“He never cursed,
 “But could not breathe, and said his heart would burst”—
 “And so will mine.”—“Then, father, you must pray;
 “My uncle said it took his pains away.”

Repeating thus his sorrows, Isaac shows
 That he, repenting, feels the debt he owes, }
 And from this source alone his every comfort flows. []

He takes no joy in office, honours, gain;
 They make him humble, nay, they give him pain;
 “These from my heart,” he cries, “all feeling drove; 400
 “They made me cold to nature, dead to love.”

He takes no joy in home, but, sighing, sees
 A son in sorrow, and a wife at ease;
 He takes no joy in office—see him now,
 And Burgess Steel has but a passing bow;
 Of one sad train of gloomy thoughts possess’d,
 He takes no joy in friends, in food, in rest— }
 Dark are the evil days, and void of peace the best. []
 And thus he lives, if living be to sigh,
 And from all comforts of the world to fly, 410 }
 Without a hope in life—without a wish to die. []

TALE XXI.

THE LEARNED BOY.

Like one well studied in a sad ostent,
To please his grandam.

Merchant of Venice, A& II. Scene 2.

And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school.

As You Like It, A& II. Scene 7.

He is a better scholar than I thought he was.—He [is] a good
sprag memory.

Merry Wives of Windsor, A& IV. Scene 1.

One that feeds
On objects, arts, and imitations,
Which, out of use, and stal'd by other men,
Begin his fashion.

Julius Caesar, A& IV. Scene 1.

Oh! torture me no more—I will confess.

Henry VI. A& III. Scene 3.

TALE XXI.

THE LEARNED BOY.

AN honest man was Farmer Jones, and true ;
He did by all as all by him should do ;
Grave, cautious, careful, fond of gain was he,
Yet famed for rustic hospitality.]

Left with his children in a widow'd state,
The quiet man submitted to his fate ;
Though prudent matrons waited for his call,
With cool forbearance he avoided all ;
Though each profess'd a pure maternal joy,
By kind attention to his feeble boy.

10

And—though a friendly widow knew no rest,
Whilst neighbour Jones was lonely and distress'd,
Nay, though the maidens spoke in tender tone
Their hearts' concern to see him left alone—
Jones still persisted in that cheerless life,
As if t'were sin to take a second wife.

Oh ! 'tis a precious thing, when wives are dead,
To find such numbers who will serve instead ;
And, in whatever state a man be thrown,
'Tis that precisely they would wish their own.

20

Left the departed infants—then their joy
Is to sustain each lovely girl and boy ;
Whatever calling his, whatever trade,
To that their chief attention has been paid ;
His happy taste in all things they approve,
His friends they honour, and his food they love ;
His wish for order, prudence in affairs,

GEORGE CRABBE

And equal temper, (thank their stars !) are theirs ;
In fact, it seem'd to be a thing decreed,
And fix'd as fate, that marriage must succeed. 30
Yet some, like Jones, with stubborn hearts and hard,
Can hear such claims, and show them no regard.

Soon as our farmer, like a general, found
By what strong foes he was encompass'd round—
Engage he dared not, and he could not fly,
But saw his hope in gentle parley lie ;
With looks of kindness then, and trembling heart,
He met the foe, and art opposed to art.

Now spoke that foe insidious—gentle tones,
And gentle looks, assumed for Farmer Jones : 40
“Three girls,” the widow cried, “a lively three
“To govern well—indeed it cannot be.”
“Yes,” he replied, “it calls for pains and care ;
“But I must bear it.”—“Sir, you cannot bear ;
“Your son is weak, and asks a mother’s eye.”—
“That, my kind friend, a father’s may supply.”—
“Such growing griefs your very soul will tease.”—
“To grieve another would not give me ease ;
“I have a mother”—“She, poor ancient soul !
“Can she the spirits of the young control ? 50
“Can she thy peace promote, partake thy care,
“Procure thy comforts, and thy sorrows share ?
“Age is itself impatient, uncontroll’d.”—
“But wives like mothers must at length be old.”—
“Thou hast shrewd servants—they are evils sore.”—
“Yet a shrewd mistress might afflict me more.”—
“Wilt thou not be a weary wailing man ?”—
“Alas ! and I must bear it as I can.”

Resisted thus, the widow soon withdrew,
That in his pride the hero might pursue ; 60
And off his wonted guard, in some retreat,
Find from a foe prepared entire defeat.
But he was prudent, for he knew in flight
These Parthian warriors turn again and fight ;
He but at freedom, not at glory aim’d,
And only safety by his caution claim’d.

Thus, when a great and powerful state decrees

THE LEARNED BOY

Upon a small one, in its love, to seize—
It vows in kindness to protect, defend,
And be the fond ally, the faithful friend; 70
It therefore wills that humbler state to place
Its hopes of safety in a fond embrace:
Then must that humbler state its wisdom prove,
By kind rejection of such pressing love;
Must dread such dangerous friendship to commence,
And stand collected in its own defence.—
Our farmer thus the proffer'd kindness fled,
And shunn'd the love that into bondage led.

The widow failing, fresh besiegers came,
To share the fate of this retiring dame; 80
And each foresaw a thousand ills attend
The man that fled from so discreet a friend;
And pray'd, kind soul! that no event might make
The harden'd heart of Farmer Jones to ache.

But he still govern'd with resistless hand,
And where he could not guide he would command.
With steady view in course direct he steer'd,
And his fair daughters loved him, though they fear'd;
Each had her school, and, as his wealth was known,
Each had in time a household of her own. 90

The boy indeed was, at the grandam's side,
Humour'd and train'd, her trouble and her pride:
Companions dear, with speech and spirits mild,
The childish widow and the vapourish child.
This nature prompts; minds uninform'd and weak
In such alliance ease and comfort seek;
Push'd by the levity of youth aside,
The cares of man, his humour, or his pride,
They feel, in their defenceless state, allied. }
The child is pleased to meet regard from age, }
The old are pleased ev'n children to engage; } 100
And all their wisdom, scorn'd by proud mankind,
They love to pour into the ductile mind,
By its own weakness into error led,
And by fond age with prejudices fed.

The father, thankful for the good he had,
Yet saw with pain a whining, timid lad;

GEORGE CRABBE

Whom he, instructing, led through cultured fields,
 To show what man performs, what nature yields;
 But Stephen, listless, wander'd from the view;
 From beasts he fled, for butterflies he flew,
 And idly gazed about, in search of something new.
 The lambs indeed he loved, and wish'd to play
 With things so mild, so harmless, and so gay;
 Best pleased the weakest of the flock to see,
 With whom he felt a sickly sympathy.

Meantime, the dame was anxious, day and night,
 To guide the notions of her babe aright,
 And on the favourite mind to throw her glimmering light;
 Her Bible-stories she impress'd betimes,
 And fill'd his head with hymns and holy rhymes;
 On powers unseen, the good and ill, she dwelt,
 And the poor boy mysterious terrors felt;
 From frightful dreams, he, waking, sobb'd in dread,
 Till the good lady came to guard his bed.

The father wish'd such errors to correct,
 But let them pass in duty and respect.
 But more it grieved his worthy mind to see
 That Stephen never would a farmer be;
 In vain he tried the shiftless lad to guide,
 And yet 'twas time that something should be tried.
 He at the village-school perchance might gain
 All that such mind could gather and retain;
 Yet the good dame affirm'd her favourite child
 Was apt and studious, though sedate and mild;
 "That he on many a learned point could speak,
 "And that his body, not his mind, was weak."

The father doubted—but to school was sent
 The timid Stephen, weeping as he went:
 There the rude lads compell'd the child to fight,
 And sent him bleeding to his home at night;
 At this the grandam more indulgent grew,
 And bade her darling "shun the beastly crew;
 "Whom Satan ruled, and who were sure to lie
 "Howling in torments, when they came to die."
 This was such comfort, that in high disdain
 He told their fate, and felt their blows again.

THE LEARNED BOY

Yet, if the boy had not a hero's heart,
Within the school he play'd a better part :
He wrote a clean, fine hand, and at his slate
150 With more success than many a hero sate ;
He thought not much indeed—but what depends
On pains and care was at his fingers' ends.

This had his father's praise, who now espied
A spark of merit, with a blaze of pride ;
And, though a farmer he would never make,
He might a pen with some advantage take ;
And as a clerk that instrument employ,
So well adapted to a timid boy.

A London cousin soon a place obtain'd,
160 Easy but humble—little could be gain'd.
The time arriv'd when youth and age must part,
Tears in each eye, and sorrow in each heart ;
The careful father bade his son attend
To all his duties, and obey his friend ;
To keep his church and there behave aright,
As one existing in his Maker's sight,
Till acts to habits led, and duty to delight :
"Then try, my boy, as quickly as you can,
"T' assume the looks and spirit of a man ;
170

"I say, be honest, faithful, civil, true,
"And this you may, and yet have courage too.
"Heroic men, their country's boast and pride,
"Have fear'd their God, and nothing fear'd beside ;
"While others daring, yet imbecile, fly
"The power of man, and that of God defy.
"Be manly then, though mild, for, sure as fate,
"Thou art, my Stephen, too effeminate ;
"Here, take my purse, and make a worthy use
"('Tis fairly stock'd) of what it will produce ;
180 "And now my blessing, not as any charm
"Or conjuration ; but 'twill do no harm."

Stephen, whose thoughts were wandering up and down,
Now charm'd with promised sights in London-town,
Now loth to leave his grandam—lost the force,
The drift and tenor of this grave discourse ;
But, in a general way, he understood

GEORGE CRABBE

'Twas good advice, and meant, "My son, be good;"
And Stephen knew that all such precepts mean,
That lads should read their Bible, and be clean.

190

The good old lady, though in some distress,
Begg'd her dear Stephen would his grief suppress:

"Nay, dry those eyes, my child—and, first of all,

"Hold fast thy faith, whatever may befall;

"Hear the best preacher, and preserve the text

"For meditation, till you hear the next;

"Within your Bible night and morning look—

"There is your duty, read no other book;

"Be not in crowds, in broils, in riots seen,

"And keep your conscience and your linen clean.

200

"Be you a Joseph, and the time may be,

"When kings and rulers will be ruled by thee."

"Nay," said the father—"Hush, my son," replied
The dame—"The Scriptures must not be denied."

The lad, still weeping, heard the wheels approach,

And took his place within the evening coach,

With heart quite rent asunder: On one side

Was love, and grief, and fear, for scenes untried;

Wild beasts and wax-work fill'd the happier part

Of Stephen's varying and divided heart;

210

This he betray'd by sighs and questions strange,

Of famous shows, the Tower, and the Exchange.

Soon at his desk was placed the curious boy,

Demure and silent at his new employ;

Yet, as he could, he much attention paid

To all around him, cautious and afraid.

On older clerks his eager eyes were fix'd,

But Stephen never in their council mix'd;

Much their contempt he fear'd, for, if like them,

He felt assured he should himself contemn:

220

"Oh! they were all so eloquent, so free,

"No! he was nothing—nothing could he be.

"They dress so smartly, and so boldly look,

"And talk as if they read it from a book;

"But I," said Stephen, "will forbear to speak,

"And they will think me prudent, and not weak.

"They talk, the instant they have dropp'd the pen,

THE LEARNED BOY

"Of singing-women and of acting-men ;
"Of plays and places where at night they walk
"Beneath the lamps, and with the ladies talk ; 230
"While other ladies for their pleasure sing,
"Oh ! 'tis a glorious and a happy thing.
"They would despise me, did they understand
"I dare not look upon a scene so grand ;
"Or see the plays when critics rise and roar,
"And hiss and groan, and cry—'Encore ! encore !'—
"There's one among them looks a little kind ;
"If more encouraged, I would ope my mind."

Alas ! poor Stephen, happier had he kept
His purpose secret, while his envy slept ; 240
Virtue, perhaps, had conquer'd, or his shame
At least preserved him simple as he came.
A year elapsed before this clerk began
To treat the rustic something like a man ;
He then in trifling points the youth advised,
Talk'd of his coat, and had it modernized ;
Or with the lad a Sunday-walk would take,
And kindly strive his passions to awake ;
Meanwhile explaining all they heard and saw,
Till Stephen stood in wonderment and awe. 250
To a neat garden near the town they stray'd,
Where the lad felt delighted and afraid ;
There all he saw was smart, and fine, and fair—
He could but marvel how he ventured there :
Soon he observed, with terror and alarm,
His friend enlock'd within a lady's arm,
And freely talking—"But it is," said he,
"A near relation, and that makes him free ;"
And much amazed was Stephen, when he knew
This was the first and only interview ; 260
Nay, had that lovely arm by him been seized,
The lovely owner had been highly pleased :
"Alas !" he sigh'd, "I never can contrive,
"At such bold, blessed freedoms to arrive ;
"Never shall I such happy courage boast ;
"I dare as soon encounter with a ghost."

Now to a play the friendly couple went,

GEORGE CRABBE

But the boy murmur'd at the money spent ;
"He loved," he said, "to buy, but not to spend—
"They only talk awhile, and there's an end." 270

"Come, you shall purchase books," the friend replied ;
"You are bewilder'd, and you want a guide ;
"To me refer the choice, and you shall find
"The light break in upon your stagnant mind !"

The cooler clerks exclaim'd, "In vain your art
"T' improve a cub without a head or heart ;
"Rustics, though coarse, and savages, though wild,
"Our cares may render liberal and mild ;
"But what, my friend, can flow from all these pains ?
"There is no dealing with a lack of brains."— 280

"True, I am hopeless to behold him man ;
"But let me make the booby what I can :
"Though the rude stone no polish will display,
"Yet you may strip the rugged coat away."

Stephen beheld his books—"I love to know
"How money goes—now here is that to show ;
"And now," he cried, "I shall be pleased to get
"Beyond the Bible—there I puzzle yet."

He spoke abash'd—"Nay, nay !" the friend replied,
"You need not lay the good old book aside ; 290

"Antique and curious, I myself indeed
"Read it at times, but as a man should read ;
"A fine old work it is, and I protest ||
"I hate to hear it treated as a jest ; ||

"The book has wisdom in it, if you look
"Wisely upon it, as another book ;

"For superstition (as our priests of sin
"Are pleased to tell us) makes us blind within.—

"Of this hereafter—we will now select
"Some works to please you, others to direct ; 300

"Tales and romances shall your fancy feed,
"And reasoners form your morals and your creed."

The books were view'd, the price was fairly paid,
And Stephen read, undaunted, undismay'd—

But not till first he paper'd all the row,
And placed in order, to enjoy the show ;
Next letter'd all the backs with care and speed,

THE LEARNED BOY

Set them in ranks, and then began to read.

The love of order,—I the thing receive
From reverend men, and I in part believe—
Shows a clear mind and clean, and whoso needs
This love but seldom in the world succeeds;
And yet with this some other love must be,
Ere I can fully to the fact agree.

310

Valour and study may by order gain,
By order sovereigns hold more steady reign;
Through all the tribes of nature order runs,
And rules around in systems and in suns;
Still has the love of order found a place
With all that's low, degrading, mean, and base,
With all that merits scorn, and all that meets disgrace:
In the cold miser, of all change afraid;
In pompous men, in public seats obey'd;
In humble placemen, heralds, solemn drones,
Fanciers of flowers, and lads like Stephen Jones;
Order to these is armour and defence,
And love of method serves in lack of sense.

320

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For rustic youth could I a list produce
Of Stephen's books, how great might be the use;
But evil fate was theirs—survey'd, enjoy'd
Some happy months, and then by force destroy'd.
So will'd the fates—but these, with patience read,
Had vast effect on Stephen's heart and head.

330

This soon appear'd—within a single week
He oped his lips, and made attempt to speak;
He fail'd indeed—but still his friend confess'd
The best have fail'd, and he had done his best.
The first of swimmers, when at first he swims,
Has little use or freedom in his limbs;
Nay, when at length he strikes with manly force,
The cramp may seize him, and impede his course.

340

Encouraged thus, our clerk again essay'd
The daring act, though daunted and afraid;
Succeeding now, though partial his success,
And pertness mark'd his manner and address,
Yet such improvement issued from his books,
That all discern'd it in his speech and looks.

285

GEORGE CRABBE

He ventured then on every theme to speak,
 And felt no feverish tingling in his cheek;
 His friend, approving, hail'd the happy change;
 The clerks exclaim'd—" 'Tis famous, and 'tis strange." — 350

Two years had pass'd; the youth attended still,
 (Though thus accomplish'd) with a ready quill;
 He sat th' allotted hours, though hard the case,
 While timid prudence ruled in virtue's place;
 By promise bound, the son his letters penn'd
 To his good parent, at the quarter's end.
 At first, he sent those lines, the state to tell
 Of his own health, and hoped his friends were well;
 He kept their virtuous precepts in his mind, 360
 And needed nothing—then his name was sign'd;
 But now he wrote of Sunday walks and views,
 Of actors' names, choice novels, and strange news;
 How coats were cut, and of his urgent need
 For fresh supply, which he desired with speed.
 The father doubted, when these letters came,
 To what they tended, yet was loth to blame:
 "Stephen was once *my duteous son*, and now
 "*My most obedient*—this can I allow?
 "Can I with pleasure or with patience see 370
 "A boy at once so heartless, and so free?"

But soon the kinsman heavy tidings told,
 That love and prudence could no more withhold:
 "Stephen, though steady at his desk, was grown
 "A rake and coxcomb—this he grieved to own;
 "His cousin left his church, and spent the day
 "Lounging about in quite a heathen way;
 "Sometimes he swore, but had indeed the grace
 "To show the shame imprinted on his face.
 "I search'd his room, and in his absence read 380
 "Books that I knew would turn a stronger head:
 "The works of atheists half the number made,
 "The rest were lives of harlots leaving trade;
 "Which neither man nor boy would deign to read,
 "If from the scandal and pollution freed.
 "I sometimes threaten'd, and would fairly state
 "My sense of things so vile and profligate;

THE LEARNED BOY

"But I'm a cit, such works are lost on me—
"They're knowledge, and (good Lord!) philosophy."

"Oh, send him down," the father soon replied; 390

"Let me behold him, and my skill be tried:

"If care and kindness lose their wonted use,

"Some rougher medicine will the end produce."

Stephen with grief and anger heard his doom—

"Go to the farmer? to the rustic's home?

"Curse the base threat'ning—" "Nay, child, never curse;

"Corrupted long, your case is growing worse."

"I!" quoth the youth, "I challenge all mankind

"To find a fault; what fault have you to find?

"Improve I not in manner, speech, and grace? 400

"Inquire—my friends will tell it to your face;

"Have I been taught to guard his kine and sheep?

"A man like me has other things to keep;

"This let him know."—"It would his wrath excite;

"But come, prepare, you must away to-night."

"What! leave my studies, my improvements leave,

"My faithful friends and intimates to grieve!"—

"Go to your father, Stephen, let him see

"All these improvements; they are lost on me."

The youth, though loth, obey'd, and soon he saw 410

The farmer-father, with some signs of awe:

Who kind, yet silent, waited to behold

How one would act, so daring, yet so cold;

And soon he found, between the friendly pair

That secrets pass'd which he was not to share;

But he resolved those secrets to obtain,

And quash rebellion in his lawful reign.

Stephen, though vain, was with his father mute;

He fear'd a crisis, and he shunn'd dispute;

And yet he long'd with youthful pride to show 420

He knew such things as farmers could not know;

These to the grandam he with freedom spoke,

Saw her amazement, and enjoy'd the joke.

But, on the father when he cast his eye,

Something he found that made his valour shy;

And thus there seem'd to be a hollow truce,

Still threat'ning something dismal to produce.

GEORGE CRABBE

Ere this the father at his leisure read
The son's choice volumes, and his wonder fled;
He saw how wrought the works of either kind 430
On so presuming, yet so weak, a mind;
These in a chosen hour he made his prey,
Condemn'd, and bore with vengeful thoughts away;
Then in a close recess the couple near,
He sat unseen to see, unheard to hear.

There soon a trial for his patience came;
Beneath were placed the youth and ancient dame,
Each on a purpose fix'd—but neither thought
How near a foe, with power and vengeance fraught.

And now the matron told, as tidings sad, 440
What she had heard of her beloved lad;
How he to graceless, wicked men gave heed,
And wicked books would night and morning read;
Some former lectures she again began,
And begg'd attention of her little man;
She brought, with many a pious boast, in view
His former studies, and condemn'd the new:
Once he the names of saints and patriarchs old,
Judges and kings, and chiefs and prophets, told;
Then he in winter-nights the Bible took, 450
To count how often in the sacred book
The sacred name appear'd, and could rehearse
Which were the middle chapter, word, and verse,
The very letter in the middle placed,
And so employ'd the hours that others waste.

"Such wert thou once; and now, my child, they say
"Thy faith like water runneth fast away;
"The prince of devils hath, I fear, beguiled
"The ready wit of my backsliding child."

On this, with lofty looks, our clerk began 460
His grave rebuke, as he assumed the man—

"There is no devil," said the hopeful youth,
"Nor prince of devils; that I know for truth.
"Have I not told you how my books describe
"The arts of priests and all the canting tribe?
"Your Bible mentions Egypt, where, it seems,
"Was Joseph found when Pharaoh dream'd his dreams,

THE LEARNED BOY

"Now, in that place, in some bewilder'd head,
 "(The learned write) religious dreams were bred ;
 "Whence through the earth, with various forms combined,
 "They came to frighten and afflict mankind,
 "Prone (so I read) to let a priest invade
 "Their souls with awe, and by his craft be made
 "Slave to his will, and profit to his trade.
 "So say my books, and how the rogues agreed
 "To blind the victims, to defraud and lead ;
 "When joys above to ready dupes were sold,
 "And hell was threaten'd to the shy and cold.

471
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"Why so amazed, and so prepared to pray ?
 "As if a Being heard a word we say !
 "This may surprise you ; I myself began
 "To feel disturb'd, and to my Bible ran ;
 "I now am wiser—yet agree in this,
 "The book has things that are not much amiss ;
 "It is a fine old work, and I protest ||
 "I hate to hear it treated as a jest :
 "The book has wisdom in it, if you look |
 "Wisely upon it as another book."—

480

"Oh ! wicked ! wicked ! my unhappy child,
 "How hast thou been by evil men beguiled !" —

490

"How ! wicked, say you ? you can little guess
 "The gain of that which you call wickedness :
 "Why, sins you think it sinful but to name
 "Have gain'd both wives and widows wealth and fame ;
 "And this, because such people never dread
 "Those threaten'd pains ; hell comes not in their head.
 "Love is our nature, wealth we all desire,
 "And what we wish 'tis lawful to acquire ;
 "So say my books—and what beside they show
 "'Tis time to let this honest farmer know.
 "Nay, look not grave ; am I commanded down
 "To feed his cattle and become his clown ?
 "Is such his purpose ? then he shall be told
 "The vulgar insult——"

500

——"Hold, in mercy hold—"
 "Father, oh ! father ! throw the whip away ; /
 "I was but jesting, on my knees I pray—

GEORGE CRABBE

"There, hold his arm—oh! leave us not alone;
"In pity cease, and I will yet atone
"For all my sin—" In vain: stroke after stroke
On side and shoulder quick as mill-wheels broke;
Quick as the patient's pulse, who trembling cried,
And still the parent with a stroke replied;
Till all the medicine he prepared was dealt,
And every bone the precious influence felt;
Till all the panting flesh was red and raw,
And every thought was turn'd to fear and awe;
Till every doubt to due respect gave place—
Such cures are done when doctors know the case.

510

"Oh! I shall die—my father! do receive
"My dying words; indeed, I do believe;
"The books are lying books, I know it well,
"There is a devil, oh! there is a hell;
"And I'm a sinner: spare me, I am young,
"My sinful words were only on my tongue;
"My heart consented not; 'tis all a lie:
"Oh! spare me then, I'm not prepared to die."
"Vain, worthless, stupid wretch!" the father cried,
"Dost thou presume to teach? art thou a guide?
"Driveller and dog, it gave the mind distress
"To hear thy thoughts in their religious dress;
"Thy pious folly moved my strong disdain,
"Yet I forgave thee for thy want of brain.
"But Job in patience must the man exceed
"Who could endure thee in thy present creed;
"Is it for thee, thou idiot, to pretend
"The wicked cause a helping hand to lend?
"Canst thou a judge in any question be?
"Atheists themselves would scorn a friend like thee.—

520

530

"Lo! yonder blaze thy worthies; in one heap
"Thy scoundrel-favourites must for ever sleep:
"Each yields its poison to the flame in turn,
"Where whores and infidels are doom'd to burn;
"Two noble faggots made the flame you see,
"Reserving only two fair twigs for thee;
"That in thy view the instruments may stand,
"And be in future ready for my hand:

540

THE LEARNED BOY

"The just mementos that, though silent, show
"Whence thy correction and improvements flow ;
"Beholding these, thou wilt confess their power,
"And feel the shame of this important hour.

550

"Hadst thou been humble, I had first design'd
"By care from folly to have freed thy mind ;
"And, when a clean foundation had been laid,
"Our priest, more able, would have lent his aid.
"But thou art weak, and force must folly guide,
"And thou art vain, and pain must humble pride.
"Teachers men honour, learners they allure ;
"But learners teaching of contempt are sure ;
"Scorn is their certain meed, and smart their only cure !"

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TALES OF THE HALL.

TO HER GRACE
THE DUCHESS OF RUTLAND

MADAM,

It is the privilege of those who are placed in that elevated situation to which your Grace is an ornament, that they give honour to the person upon whom they confer a favour. When I dedicate to your Grace the fruits of many years, and speak of my debt to the House of Rutland, I feel that I am not without pride in the confession nor insensible to the honour which such gratitude implies. Forty years have elapsed since this debt commenced. On my entrance into the cares of life, and while contending with its difficulties, a Duke and Duchess of Rutland observed and protected me—in my progress a Duke and Duchess of Rutland favoured and assisted me—and, when I am retiring from the world, a Duke and Duchess of Rutland receive my thanks, and accept my offering. All, even in this world of mutability, is not change: I have experienced unvaried favour—I have felt undiminished respect.

With the most grateful remembrance of what I owe, and the most sincere conviction of the little I can return, I present these pages to your Grace's acceptance, and beg leave to subscribe myself,

May it please your Grace,

With respect and gratitude,

Your Grace's

Most obedient and devoted Servant,

GEORGE CRABBE.

*Troubridge,
June, 1819.*

PREFACE.

IF I did not fear that it would appear to my readers like arrogance, or if it did not seem to myself indecorous to send two volumes of considerable magnitude from the press without preface or apology, without one petition for the reader's attention, or one plea for the writer's defects, I would most willingly spare myself an address of this kind, and more especially for these reasons: first, because a preface is a part of a book seldom honoured by a reader's perusal; secondly, because it is both difficult and distressing to write that which we think will be disregarded; and thirdly, because I do not conceive that I am called upon for such introductory matter by any of the motives which usually influence an author when he composes his prefatory address.

When a writer, whether of poetry or prose, first addresses the public, he has generally something to offer which relates to himself or to his work, and which he considers as a necessary prelude to the work itself, to prepare his readers for the entertainment or the instruction they may expect to receive; for one of these every man who publishes must suppose he affords—this the act itself implies, and in proportion to his conviction of this fact must be his feeling of the difficulty in which he has placed himself: the difficulty consists in reconciling the implied presumption of the undertaking, whether to please or to instruct mankind, with the diffidence and modesty of an untried candidate for fame or favour. Hence originate the many reasons an author assigns for his appearance in that character, whether they actually exist, or are merely offered to hide the motives which cannot be openly avowed: namely, the want or the vanity

PREFACE

of the man, as his wishes for profit or reputation may most prevail with him.

Now, reasons of this kind, whatever they may be, cannot be availing beyond their first appearance. An author, it is true, may again feel his former apprehensions, may again be elevated or depressed by the suggestions of vanity and diffidence, and may be again subject to the cold and hot fit of aguish expectation; but he is no more a stranger to the press, nor has the motives or privileges of one who is. With respect to myself, it is certain they belong not to me. Many years have elapsed since I became a candidate for indulgence as an inexperienced writer; and to assume the language of such writer now, and to plead for his indulgences, would be proof of my ignorance of the place assigned to me, and the degree of favour which I have experienced; but of that place I am not uninformed, and with that degree of favour I have no reason to be dissatisfied.

It was the remark of the pious, but on some occasions the querulous, author of the *Night Thoughts*, that he had "been so long remembered, he was forgotten"—an expression in which there is more appearance of discontent than of submission: if he had patience, it was not the patience that *smiles at grief*. It is not therefore entirely in the sense of the good Doctor that I apply these words to myself, or to my more early publications. So many years indeed have passed since their first appearance, that I have no reason to complain, on that account, if they be now slumbering with other poems of decent reputation in their day—not dead indeed, nor entirely forgotten, but certainly not the subjects of discussion or conversation as when first introduced to the notice of the public by those whom the public will not forget, whose protection was credit to their author, and whose approbation was fame to them. Still these early publications had so long preceded any other, that, if not altogether unknown, I was, when I came again before the public, in a situation which excused, and perhaps rendered necessary, some explanation; but this also has passed away, and none of my readers will now take the trouble of making any inquiries respecting my motives for writing or for publishing these Tales or verses of any description. Known to each other as readers and authors are

GEORGE CRABBE

known, they will require no preface to bespeak their good will ; nor shall I be under the necessity of soliciting the kindness which experience has taught me, endeavouring to merit, I shall not fail to receive.

There is one motive—and it is a powerful one—which sometimes induces an author, and more particularly a poet, to ask the attention of his readers to his prefatory address. This is when he has some favourite and peculiar style or manner which he would explain and defend, and chiefly if he should have adopted a mode of versification of which an uninitiated reader was not likely to perceive either the merit or the beauty. In such case it is natural, and surely pardonable, to assert and to prove, as far as reason will bear us on, that such method of writing has both ; to show in what the beauty consists, and what peculiar difficulty there is, which, when conquered, creates the merit. How far any particular poet has or has not succeeded in such attempt is not my business nor my purpose to inquire : I have no peculiar notion to defend, no poetical heterodoxy to support, nor theory of any kind to vindicate or oppose—that which I have used is probably the most common measure in our language ; and therefore, whatever be its advantages or defects, they are too well known to require from me a description of the one, or an apology for the other.

Perhaps still more frequent than any explanation of the work is an account of the author himself, the situation in which he is placed, or some circumstances of peculiar kind in his life, education, or employment. How often has youth been pleaded for deficiencies or redundancies, for the existence of which youth may be an excuse, and yet be none for their exposure. Age too has been pleaded for the errors and failings in a work which the octogenarian had the discernment to perceive, and yet had not the fortitude to suppress. Many other circumstances are made apologies for a writer's infirmities : his much employment, and many avocations, adversity, necessity, and the good of mankind. These, or any of them, however availing in themselves, avail not me. I am neither so young nor so old, so much engaged by one pursuit, or by many—I am not so urged by want, or so stimulated by a desire of public benefit—that I can

PREFACE

borrow one apology from the many which I have named. How far they prevail with our readers, or with our judges, I cannot tell ; and it is unnecessary for me to inquire into the validity of arguments which I have not to produce.

If there be any combination of circumstances which may be supposed to affect the mind of a reader, and in some degree to influence his judgment, the junction of youth, beauty, and merit in a female writer may be allowed to do this ; and yet one of the most forbidding of titles is "Poems by a very young Lady"—and this, although beauty and merit were largely insinuated. Ladies, it is true, have of late little need of any indulgence as authors, and names may readily be found which rather excite the envy of man than plead for his lenity. Our estimation of title also in a writer has materially varied from that of our predecessors ; "Poems by a Nobleman" would create a very different sensation in our minds from that which was formerly excited when they were so announced. A noble author had then no pretensions to a seat so secure on the "sacred hill," that authors not noble, and critics not gentle, dared not attack ; and they delighted to take revenge, by their contempt and derision of the poet, for the pain which their submission and respect to the man had cost them. But in our times we find that a nobleman writes, not merely as well, but better than other men : insomuch that readers in general begin to fancy that the Muses have relinquished their old partiality for rags and a garret, and are become altogether aristocratical in their choice. A conceit so well supported by fact would be readily admitted, did it not appear at the same time, that there were in the higher ranks of society men who could write as tamely, or as absurdly, as they had ever been accused of doing. We may, therefore, regard the works of any noble author as extraordinary productions, but must not found any theory upon them ; and, notwithstanding their appearance, must look on genius and talent as we are wont to do on time and chance, that happen indifferently to all mankind.

But, whatever influence any peculiar situation of a writer might have, it cannot be a benefit to me, who have no such peculiarity. I must rely upon the willingness of my readers to

GEORGE CRABBE

be pleased with that which was designed to give them pleasure, and upon the cordiality which naturally springs from a remembrance of our having before parted without any feelings of disgust on the one side, or of mortification on the other.

With this hope I would conclude the present subject ; but I am called upon by duty to acknowledge my obligations, and more especially for two of the following Tales—the Story of Lady Barbara, in Book XVI; and that of Ellen in Book XVIII. The first of these I owe to the kindness of a fair friend, who will, I hope, accept the thanks which I very gratefully pay, and pardon me if I have not given to her relation the advantages which she had so much reason to expect. The other story, that of Ellen, could I give it in the language of him who related it to me, would please and affect my readers. It is by no means my only debt, though the one I now more particularly acknowledge; for who shall describe all that he gains in the social, the unrestrained, and the frequent conversations with a friend, who is at once communicative and judicious—whose opinions, on all subjects of literary kind, are founded on good taste, and exquisite feeling? It is one of the greatest “pleasures of my memory” to recal in absence those conversations; and, if I do not in direct terms mention with whom I conversed, it is both because I have no permission, and my readers will have no doubt.

The first intention of the poet must be to please; for, if he means to instruct, he must render the instruction which he hopes to convey palatable and pleasant. I will not assume the tone of a moralist, nor promise that my relations shall be beneficial to mankind; but I have endeavoured, not unsuccessfully I trust, that, in whatsoever I have related or described, there should be nothing introduced which has a tendency to excuse the vices of man by associating with them sentiments that demand our respect, and talents that compel our admiration. There is nothing in these pages which has the mischievous effect of confounding truth and error, or confusing our ideas of right and wrong. I know not which is most injurious to the yielding minds of the young—to render virtue less respectable by making its possessors ridiculous, or by describing vice with so

PREFACE

many fascinating qualities, that it is either lost in the assemblage, or pardoned by the association. Man's heart is sufficiently prone to make excuse for man's infirmity, and needs not the aid of poetry, or eloquence, to take from vice its native deformity. A character may be respectable with all its faults, but it must not be made respectable by them. It is grievous when genius will condescend to place strong and evil spirits in a commanding view, or excite our pity and admiration for men of talents, degraded by crime, when struggling with misfortune. It is but too true that great and wicked men may be so presented to us as to demand our applause, when they should excite our abhorrence; but it is surely for the interest of mankind, and our own self-direction, that we should ever keep at unapproachable distance our respect and our reproach.

I have one observation more to offer. It may appear to some that a minister of religion, in the decline of life, should have no leisure for such amusements as these; and for them I have no reply. But to those who are more indulgent to the propensities, the studies, and the habits of mankind, I offer some apology when I produce these volumes, not as the occupations of my life, but the fruits of my leisure—the employment of that time which, if not given to them, had passed in the vacuity of unrecorded idleness, or had been lost in the indulgence of unregistered thoughts and fancies, that melt away in the instant they are conceived, and “*leave not a wreck behind.*”

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK I.

THE HALL.

The Meeting of the Brothers, George and Richard—The Retirement of the elder to his native Village—Objects and Persons whom he found there—The Brother described in various Particulars—The Invitation and Journey of the younger—His Soliloquy and Arrival.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK I.

THE HALL.

THE Brothers met who many a year had past
Since their last meeting, and that seem'd their last ;
They had no parent then or common friend
Who might their hearts to mutual kindness bend ;
Who, touching both in their divided state,
Might generous thoughts and warm desires create ;
For there are minds whom we must first excite
And urge to feeling, ere they can unite ;
As we may hard and stubborn metals beat
And blend together, if we duly heat.

10

The elder, George, had past his threescore years,
A busy actor, sway'd by hopes and fears
Of powerful kind ; and he had fill'd the parts
That try our strength and agitate our hearts.
He married not, and yet he well approved
The social state ; but then he rashly loved ;
Gave to a strong delusion all his youth,
Led by a vision till alarm'd by truth.
That vision past, and of that truth possest,
His passions wearied and disposed to rest,
George yet had will and power a place to choose,
Where Hope might sleep, and terminate her views.
He chose his native village, and the hill
He climb'd a boy had its attraction still ;
With that small brook beneath, where he would stand,

20

GEORGE CRABBE

And stooping fill the hollow of his hand,
To quench th' impatient thirst—then stop awhile
To see the sun upon the waters smile,
In that sweet weariness when, long denied,
We drink and view the fountain that supplied
The sparkling bliss—and feel, if not express,
Our perfect ease in that sweet weariness. 30

The oaks yet flourish'd in that fertile ground,
Where still the church with lofty tower was found ;
And still that Hall, a first, a favourite view,
But not the elms that form'd its avenue ;
They fell ere George arrived, or yet had stood,
For he in reverence held the living wood,
That widely spreads in earth the deepening root,
And lifts to heaven the still aspiring shoot ;
From age to age they fill'd a growing space,
But hid the mansion they were meant to grace. 40

It was an ancient, venerable hall,
And once surrounded by a moat and wall ;
A part was added by a squire of taste,
Who, while unvalued acres ran to waste,
Made spacious rooms, whence he could look about,
And mark improvements as they rose without :
He fill'd the moat, he took the wall away,
He thinn'd the park, and bade the view be gay. 50
The scene was rich, but he who should behold
Its worth was poor, and so the whole was sold.

Just then our merchant from his desk retired,
And made the purchase that his heart desired—
The Hall of Binning, his delight a boy,
That gave his fancy in her flight employ.
Here, from his father's modest home, he gazed,
Its grandeur charm'd him, and its height amazed,
Work of past ages ; and the brick-built place
Where he resided was in much disgrace ;
But never in his fancy's proudest dream
Did he the master of that mansion seem. 60
Young was he then, and little did he know
What years on care and diligence bestow ;
Now, young no more, retired to views well known,

THE HALL

He finds that object of his awe his own :
 The Hall at Binning!—how he loves the gloom
 That sun-excluding window gives the room ;
 Those broad brown stairs on which he loves to tread ;
 Those beams within ; without, that length of lead, 70
 On which the names of wanton boys appear,
 Who died old men, and left memorials here—
 Carvings of feet and hands, and knots and flowers,
 The fruits of busy minds in idle hours.

Here, while our squire the modern part possess'd,
 His partial eye upon the old would rest ;
 That best his comforts gave—this sooth'd his feelings best. [}

Here, day by day, withdrawn from busy life,
 No child t' awake him, to engage no wife,
 When friends were absent, not to books inclined, 80
 He found a sadness steal upon his mind ;
 Sighing the works of former lords to see,
 "I follow them," he cried, "but who will follow me?"

Some ancient men whom he a boy had known
 He knew again ; their changes were his own.
 Comparing now he view'd them, and he felt
 That time with him in lenient mood had dealt ;
 While some the half-distinguish'd features bore
 That he was doubtful if he saw before,
 And some in memory lived, whom he must see no more. 90 [}

Here George had found, yet scarcely hoped to find,
 Companions meet, minds fitted to his mind ;
 Here, late and loth, the worthy rector came,
 From college dinners and a fellow's fame ;
 Yet, here when fix'd, was happy to behold
 So near a neighbour in a friend so old.
 Boys on one form they parted, now to meet
 In equal state, their worships on one seat.

Here were a sister-pair, who seem'd to live
 With more respect than affluence can give ; 100
 Although not affluent, they, by nature graced,
 Had sense and virtue, dignity and taste ;
 Their minds by sorrows, by misfortunes tried,
 Were vex'd and heal'd, were pain'd and purified.

Hither a sage physician came, and plann'd,

GEORGE CRABBE

With books his guides, improvements on his land ;
 Nor less to mind than matter would he give
 His noble thoughts, to know how spirits live,
 And what is spirit ; him his friends advised
 To think with fear ; but caution he despised ; 110
 And hints of fear provoked him till he dared
 Beyond himself, nor bold assertion spared,
 But fiercely spoke, like those who strongly feel,
 "Priests and their craft, enthusiasts and their zeal."

More yet appear'd, of whom as we proceed—
 Ah ! yield not yet to languor—you shall read.

But ere the events that from this meeting rose,
 Be they of pain or pleasure, we disclose,
 It is of custom, doubtless is of use,
 That we our heroes first should introduce. 120
 Come, then, fair Truth ! and let me clearly see
 The minds I paint, as they are seen in thee ;
 To me their merits and their faults impart ;
 Give me to say, "frail being ! such thou art,"
 And closely let me view the naked human heart. }

GEORGE loved to think ; but, as he late began
 To muse on all the grander thoughts of man,
 He took a solemn and a serious view
 Of his religion, and he found it true ;
 Firmly, yet meekly, he his mind applied 130
 To this great subject, and was satisfied.

He then proceeded, not so much intent,
 But still in earnest, and to church he went.
 Although they found some difference in their creed,
 He and his pastor cordially agreed,
 Convinced that they who would the truth obtain
 By disputation, find their efforts vain ;
 The church he view'd as liberal minds will view,
 And there he fix'd his principles and pew.

He saw—he thought he saw—how weakness, pride, 140
 And habit, draw seceding crowds aside :
 Weakness, that loves on trifling points to dwell ;
 Pride, that at first from Heaven's own worship fell ;
 And habit, going where it went before,
 Or to the meeting or the tavern door.

THE HALL

George loved the cause of freedom, but reprov'd
All who with wild and boyish ardour loved :
Those who believed they never could be free,
Except when fighting for their liberty ;
Who by their very clamour and complaint
Invite coercion or enforce restraint. 150
He thought a trust so great, so good a cause,
Was only to be kept by guarding laws ;
For, public blessings firmly to secure,
We must a lessening of the good endure.
The public waters are to none denied ;
All drink the stream, but only few must guide.
There must be reservoirs to hold supply,
And channels form'd to send the blessing by ;
The public good must be a private care ; 160
None all they would may have, but all a share.
So we must freedom with restraint enjoy ;
What crowds possess they will, uncheck'd, destroy ;
And hence, that freedom may to all be dealt,
Guards must be fix'd, and safety must be felt.

So thought our squire, nor wish'd the guards t' appear
So strong, that safety might be bought too dear ;
The constitution was the ark that he
Join'd to support with zeal and sanctity ;
Nor would expose it, as th' accursed son 170
His father's weakness, to be gazed upon.

"I for that freedom make," said he, "my prayer,
"That suits with all, like atmospheric air ;
"That is to mortal man by heaven assign'd,
"Who cannot bear a pure and perfect kind.
"The lighter gas, that, taken in the frame,
"The spirit heats, and sets the blood in flame :
"Such is the freedom which when men approve,
"They know not what a dangerous thing they love."

George chose the company of men of sense, 180
But could with wit in moderate share dispense ;
He wish'd in social ease his friends to meet,
When still he thought the female accent sweet ;
Well from the ancient, better from the young,
He loved the lisps of the mother tongue.

GEORGE CRABBE

He ate and drank, as much as men who think
Of life's best pleasures, ought to eat or drink ;
Men purely temperate might have taken less,
But still he loved indulgence, not excess ;
Nor would alone the grants of fortune taste,
But shared the wealth he judged it crime to waste ;
And thus obtain'd the sure reward of care—
For none can spend like him who learns to spare. 190

Time, thought, and trouble made the man appear—
By nature shrewd—sarcastic and severe ;
Still, he was one whom those who fully knew
Esteem'd and trusted, one correct and true ;
All on his word with surety might depend,
Kind as a man, and faithful as a friend.
But him the many [knew] not, knew not cause 200
In their new squire for censure or applause ;
Ask them, "Who dwelt within that lofty wall ?"
And they would say, "the gentleman was tall ;
"Look'd old when follow'd, but alert when met,
"And had some vigour in his movements yet ;
"He stoops, but not as one infirm ; and wears
"Dress that becomes his station and his years."

Such was the man who from the world return'd
Nor friend nor foe ; he prized it not, nor spurn'd ;
But came and sat him in his village down, 210
Safe from its smile, and careless of its frown :
He, fairly looking into life's account,
Saw frowns and favours were of like amount ;
And viewing all—his perils, prospects, purse—
He said, "Content ! 'tis well it is no worse."

Through ways more rough had fortune RICHARD led,
The world he traversed was the book he read ;
Hence clashing notions and opinions strange
Lodged in his mind : all liable to change.

By nature generous, open, daring, free, 220
The vice he hated was hypocrisy.
Religious notions, in her latter years,
His mother gave, admonish'd by her fears ;
To these he added, as he chanced to read
A pious work or learn a christian creed.

THE HALL

He heard the preacher by the highway side,
The church's teacher, and the meeting's guide ;
And, mixing all their matters in his brain,
Distill'd a something he could ill explain ;
But still it served him for his daily use,
And kept his lively passions from abuse ;
For he believed, and held in reverence high,
The truth so dear to man—"not all shall die."
The minor portions of his creed hung loose,
For time to shapen and an whole produce ;
This love effected, and a favourite maid
With clearer views his honest flame repaid ;
Hers was the thought correct, the hope sublime,
She shaped his creed, and did the work of time.

230

He spake of freedom as a nation's cause,
And loved, like George, our liberty and laws ;
But had more youthful ardour to be free,
And stronger fears for injured liberty.

240

With him, on various questions that arose,
The monarch's servants were the people's foes ;
And, though he fought with all a Briton's zeal,
He felt for France as Freedom's children feel ;
Went far with her in what she thought reform,
And hail'd the revolutionary storm ;
Yet would not here, where there was least to win,
And most to lose, the doubtful work begin ;
But look'd on change with some religious fear,
And cried, with filial dread, "Ah! come not here."

250

His friends he did not as the thoughtful choose ;
Long to deliberate was, he judged, to lose ;
Frankly he join'd the free, nor suffer'd pride
Or doubt to part them, whom their fate allied ;
Men with such minds at once each other aid ;
"Frankness," they cry, "with frankness is repaid ;
"If honest, why suspect? if poor, of what afraid?
"Wealth's timid votaries may with caution move ;
"Be it our wisdom to confide and love."

}
260[]

So pleasures came, (not purchased first or plann'd)
But the chance pleasures that the poor command ;
They came but seldom, they remain'd not long,

309

GEORGE CRABBE

Nor gave him time to question "are they wrong?"
 These he enjoy'd, and left to after time
 To judge the folly or decide the crime;
 Sure had he been, he had perhaps been pure
 From this reproach—but Richard was not sure— 270
 Yet from the sordid vice, the mean, the base,
 He stood aloof—death frown'd not like disgrace.

With handsome figure, and with manly air,
 He pleased the sex, who all to him were fair;
 With filial love he look'd on forms decay'd,
 And admiration's debt to beauty paid;
 On sea or land, wherever Richard went,
 He felt affection, and he found content;
 There was in him a strong presiding hope
 In fortune's tempests, and it bore him up. 280
 But when that mystic vine his mansion graced,
 When numerous branches round his board were placed,
 When sighs of apprehensive love were heard—
 Then first the spirit of the hero fear'd;
 Then he reflected on the father's part,
 And all an husband's sorrow touch'd his heart;
 Then thought he, "Who will their assistance lend?
 "And be the children's guide, the parent's friend?
 "Who shall their guardian, their protector be?
 "I have a brother—Well!—and so has he." 290

And now they met; a message—kind, 'tis true,
 But verbal only—ask'd an interview;
 And many a mile, perplex'd by doubt and fear,
 Had Richard past, unwilling to appear—
 "How shall I now my unknown way explore,
 "He proud and rich—I very proud and poor?
 "Perhaps my friend a dubious speech mistook,
 "And George may meet me with a stranger's look;
 "Then to my home when I return again,
 "How shall I bear this business to explain, 300
 "And tell of hopes raised high, and feelings hurt, in vain? []
 "How stands the case? My brother's friend and mine
 "Met at an inn, and sat them down to dine:
 "When, having settled all their own affairs,
 "And kindly canvass'd such as were not theirs,

THE HALL

“Just as my friend was going to retire—
“‘Stay!—you will see the brother of our squire,’
“Said his companion; ‘be his friend, and tell
“‘The captain that his brother loves him well,
“‘And, when he has no better thing in view,
310
“‘Will be rejoiced to see him. Now, adieu!’
“Well! here I am; and, brother, take you heed,
“I am not come to flatter you and feed;
“You shall no soother, fawner, hearer find,
“I will not brush your coat, nor smooth your mind;
“I will not hear your tales the whole day long,
“Nor swear you’re right if I believe you wrong.
“Nor be a witness of the facts you state,
“Nor as my own adopt your love or hate:
320
“I will not earn my dinner when I dine,
“By taking all your sentiments for mine;
“Nor watch the guiding motions of your eye,
“Before I venture question or reply;
“Nor when you speak affect an awe profound,
“Sinking my voice, as if I fear’d the sound;
“Nor to your looks obediently attend,
“The poor, the humble, the dependant friend;
“Yet, son of that dear mother could I meet—
“But lo! the mansion—’tis a fine old seat!”

The Brothers met, with both too much at heart
330
To be observant of each other’s part.
“Brother, I’m glad,” was all that George could say,
Then stretch’d his hand, and turn’d his head away;
For he in tender tears had no delight,
But scorn’d the thought, and ridiculed the sight;
Yet now with pleasure, though with some surprise,
He felt his heart o’erflowing at his eyes.

Richard, mean time, made some attempts to speak,
Strong in his purpose, in his trial weak;
340
We cannot nature by our wishes rule,
Nor at our will her warm emotions cool;—
At length affection, like a risen tide,
Stood still, and then seem’d slowly to subside;
Each on the other’s looks had power to dwell,
And Brother Brother greeted passing well.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK II.

THE BROTHERS.

Further Account of the Meeting—Of the Men—The Mother—The Uncle—The private Tutor—The second Husband—Dinner Conversation—School of the Rector and Squire—The Master.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK II.

THE BROTHERS.

AT length the Brothers met, no longer tried
By those strong feelings that in time subside ;
Not fluent yet their language, but the eye
And action spoke both question and reply ;
Till the heart rested, and could calmly feel ;
Till the shook compass felt the settling steel ;
Till playful smiles on graver converse broke,
And either speaker less abruptly spoke.
Still was there oftentimes silence, silence blest,
Expressive, thoughtful—their emotions' rest :
Pauses that came not from a want of thought,
But want of ease, by wearied passion sought ;
For souls, when hurried by such powerful force,
Rest, and retrace the pleasure of the course.
They differ'd much ; yet might observers trace
Likeness of features both in mind and face ;
Pride they possess'd, that neither strove to hide,
But not offensive, not obtrusive pride.
Unlike had been their life, unlike the fruits
Of different tempers, studies, and pursuits ;
Nay, in such varying scenes the men had moved,
'Twas passing strange that aught alike they loved.
But all distinction now was thrown apart,

10

20

313

GEORGE CRABBE

While these strong feelings ruled in either heart.
As various colours in a painted ball,
While it has rest, are seen distinctly all,
Till, whirl'd around by some exterior force,
They all are blended in the rapid course :
So in repose, and not by passion sway'd,
We saw the difference by their habits made ;
But, tried by strong emotions, they became
Fill'd with one love, and were in heart the same ;
Joy to the face its own expression sent,
And gave a likeness in the looks it lent.

30

All now was sober certainty ; the joy
That no strong passions swell till they destroy :
For they, like wine, our pleasures raise so high,
That they subdue our strength, and then they die.
George in his brother felt a glowing pride,
He wonder'd who that fertile mind supplied—
“Where could the wanderer gather on his road
“Knowledge so various? how the mind this food?
“No college train'd him, guideless through his life,
“Without a friend—not so! he has a wife.
“Ah! had I married, I might now have seen
“My—No! it never, never could have been,
“That long enchantment, that pernicious state!—
“True, I recover'd, but alas! too late—
“And here is Richard, poor indeed—but—nay!
“This is self-torment—foolish thoughts, away!”

40

50

Ease leads to habit, as success to ease,
He lives by rule who lives himself to please ;
For change is trouble, and a man of wealth
Consults his quiet as he guards his health ;
And habit now on George had sovereign power,
His actions all had their accustom'd hour :
At the fix'd time he slept, he walk'd, he read,
Or sought his grounds, his gruel, and his bed ;
For every season he with caution dress'd,
And morn and eve had the appropriate vest ;
He talk'd of early mists, and night's cold air,
And in one spot was fix'd his worship's chair.

60

But not a custom yet on Richard's mind

THE BROTHERS

Had force, or him to certain modes confined ;
To him no joy such frequent visits paid
That habit by its beaten track was made ;
He was not one who at his ease could say,
"We'll live to-morrow as we lived to-day ;"
But he and his were as the ravens fed,
As the day came it brought the daily bread.

70

George, born to fortune, though of moderate kind,
Was not in haste his road through life to find.
His father early lost, his mother tried
To live without him, liked it not, and—sigh'd,
When, for her widow'd hand, an amorous youth applied. [}]
She still was young, and felt that she could share
A lover's passion, and an husband's care ;
Yet past twelve years before her son was told,
To his surprise, "your father you behold."
But he beheld not with his mother's eye
The new relation, and would not comply,
But all obedience, all connexion spurn'd,
And fled their home, where he no more return'd.
His father's brother was a man whose mind
Was to his business and his bank confined ;
His guardian care the captious nephew sought,
And was received, caress'd, advised, and taught.

80

"That Irish beggar, whom your mother took,
"Does you this good, he sends you to your book ;
"Yet love not books beyond their proper worth,
"But, when they fit you for the world, go forth :
"They are like beauties, and may blessings prove,
"When we with caution study them, or love ;
"But, when to either we our souls devote,
"We grow unfitted for that world, and dote."

90

George to a school of higher class was sent,
But he was ever grieving that he went :
A still, retiring, musing, dreaming boy,
He relish'd not their sudden bursts of joy ;
Nor the tumultuous pleasures of a rude,
A noisy, careless, fearless multitude.
He had his own delights, as one who flies
From every pleasure that a crowd supplies ;

100

GEORGE CRABBE

Thrice he return'd, but then was weary grown,
And was indulged with studies of his own.

Still could the rector and his friend relate
The small adventures of that distant date ;
And Richard listen'd as they spake of time
Past in that world of misery and crime.

Freed from his school, a priest of gentle kind
The uncle found to guide the nephew's mind ;
Pleased with his teacher, George so long remain'd,
The mind was weaken'd by the store it gain'd.

110

His guardian uncle, then on foreign ground,
No time to think of his improvements found ;
Nor had the nephew, now to manhood grown,
Talents or taste for trade or commerce shown,
But shunn'd a world of which he little knew,
Nor of that little did he like the view.

His mother chose, nor I the choice upbraid,
An Irish soldier of an house decay'd,
And passing poor ; but, precious in her eyes
As she in his, they both obtain'd a prize.
To do the captain justice, she might share
What of her jointure his affairs could spare ;
Irish he was in his profusion—true,
But he was Irish in affection too ;
And, though he spent her wealth and made her grieve,
He always said “my dear” and “with your leave.”
Him she survived ; she saw his boy possess'd
Of manly spirit, and then sank to rest.

120

130

Her sons thus left, some legal cause required
That they should meet, but neither this desired.
George, a recluse, with mind engaged, was one
Who did no business, with whom none was done ;
Whose heart, engross'd by its peculiar care,
Shared no one's counsel—no one his might share.

Richard, a boy, a lively boy, was told
Of his half-brother, haughty, stern, and cold ;
And his boy folly, or his manly pride,
Made him on measures cool and harsh decide.
So, when they met, a distant cold salute
Was of a long-expected day the fruit ;

140

THE BROTHERS

The rest by proxies managed, each withdrew,
Vex'd by the business and the brother too ;
But now they met when time had calm'd the mind ;
Both wish'd for kindness, and it made them kind.
George had no wife or child, and was disposed
To love the man on whom his hope reposed :
Richard had both ; and those so well beloved, 150
Husband and father were to kindness moved ;
And thus th' affections check'd, subdued, restrain'd,
Rose in their force, and in their fulness reign'd.

The bell now bids to dine ; the friendly priest,
Social and shrewd, the day's delight increased.
Brief and abrupt their speeches while they dined,
Nor were their themes of intellectual kind ;
Nor, dinner past, did they to these advance,
But left the subjects they discuss'd to chance.

Richard, whose boyhood in the place was spent, 160
Profound attention to the speakers lent,
Who spake of men ; and, as he heard a name,
Actors and actions to his memory came.
Then, too, the scenes he could distinctly trace,
Here he had fought, and there had gain'd a race ;
In that church-walk he had affrighted been ;
In that old tower he had a something seen—
What time, dismiss'd from school, he upward cast
A fearful look, and trembled as he past.

No private tutor Richard's parents sought, 170
Made keen by hardship, and by trouble taught ;
They might have sent him—some the counsel gave—
Seven gloomy winters of the North to brave :
Where a few pounds would pay for board and bed,
While the poor frozen boy was taught and fed ;
When, say he lives, fair, freckled, lank and lean,
The lad returns shrewd, subtle, close and keen ;
With all the northern virtues, and the rules
Taught to the thrifty in these thriving schools.
There had he gone, and borne this trying part— 180
But Richard's mother had a mother's heart.

Now squire and rector were return'd to school,
And spoke of him who there had sovereign rule :

GEORGE CRABBE

He was, it seem'd, a tyrant of the sort
 Who make the cries of tortured boys his sport ;
 One of a race, if not extinguish'd, tamed—
 The flogger now is of the act ashamed ;
 But this great mind all mercy's calls withstood ;
 This Holofernes was a man of blood.

"Students," he said, "like horses on the road, 190
 "Must well be lash'd before they take the load ;
 "They may be willing for a time to run,
 "But you must whip them ere the work be done.
 "To tell a boy, that, if he will improve,
 "His friends will praise him, and his parents love,
 "Is doing nothing—he has not a doubt
 "But they will love him, nay, applaud, without ;
 "Let no fond sire a boy's ambition trust,
 "To make him study, let him see he must."

Such his opinion ; and, to prove it true, 200
 At least sincere, it was his practice too.
 Pluto they call'd him, and they named him well :
 'Twas not an heaven where he was pleased to dwell.
 From him a smile was like the Greenland sun,
 Surprising, nay portentous, when it shone ;
 Or like the lightning, for the sudden flash
 Prepared the children for the thunder's crash.

O ! had Narcissa, when she fondly kiss'd
 The weeping boy whom she to school dismiss'd,
 Had she beheld him shrinking from the arm 210
 Uplifted high to do the greater harm,
 Then seen her darling stript, and that pure white,
 And—O ! her soul had fainted at the sight ;
 And with those looks that love could not withstand,
 She would have cried, "Barbarian, hold thy hand !"
 In vain ! no grief to this stern soul could speak,
 No iron-tear roll down this Pluto's cheek.

Thus far they went, half earnest, half in jest,
 Then turn'd to themes of deeper interest ;
 While Richard's mind, that for awhile had stray'd, 220
 Call'd home its powers, and due attention paid.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK III.

BOYS AT SCHOOL.

The School—School-Boys—The Boy-Tyrant—Sir Hector Blane—School-Boys in after Life, how changed—how the same—The patronized Boy, his Life and Death—Reflections—Story of Harry Bland.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK III.

BOYS AT SCHOOL.

WE name the world a school, for day by day
We something learn, till we are call'd away ;
The school we name a world,—for vice and pain,
Fraud and contention, there begin to reign ;
And much, in fact, this lesser world can show
Of grief and crime that in the greater grow.
“You saw,” said George, “in that still-hated school
“How the meek suffer, how the haughty rule ;
“There soft, ingenuous, gentle minds endure
“Ills that ease, time, and friendship fail to cure ; 10
“There the best hearts, and those, who shrink from sin,
“Find some seducing imp to draw them in,
“Who takes infernal pleasure to impart
“The strongest poison to the purest heart.
“Call to your mind this scene—Yon boy behold :
“How hot the vengeance of a heart so cold !
“See how he beats, whom he had just reviled
“And made rebellious—that imploring child ;
“How fierce his eye, how merciless his blows,
“And how his anger on his insult grows ; 10
“You saw this Hector and his patient slave,
“Th’ insulting speech, the cruel blows he gave.

BOYS AT SCHOOL

"Mix'd with mankind, his interest in his sight,
"We found this Nimrod civil and polite ;
"There was no triumph in his manner seen,
"He was so humble you might think him mean.
"Those angry passions slept till he attain'd
"His purposed wealth, and waked when that was gain'd ;
"He then resumed the native wrath and pride,
"The more indulged, as longer laid aside ; 30
"Wife, children, servants, all obedience pay,
"The slaves at school no greater slaves than they ;
"No more dependant, he resumes the rein,
"And shows the school-boy turbulence again.
"Were I a poet, I would say, he brings
"To recollection some impetuous springs ;
"See one that issues from its humble source,
"To gain new powers, and run its noisy course :
"Frothy and fierce among the rocks it goes,
"And threatens all that bound it or oppose ; 40
"Till wider grown, and finding large increase,
"Though bounded still, it moves along in peace ;
"And, as its waters to the ocean glide,
"They bear a busy people on its tide ;
"But there arrived, and from its channel free,
"Those swelling waters meet the mighty sea ;
"With threat'ning force the new-form'd billows swell,
"And now affright the crowd they bore so well."
"Yet," said the rector, "all these early signs
"Of vice are lost, and vice itself declines ; 50
"Religion counsels ; troubles, sorrows rise,
"And the vile spirit in the conflict dies.
"Sir Hector Blane, the champion of the school,
"Was very blockhead, but was form'd for rule ;
"Learn he could not ; he said he could not learn,
"But he profess'd it gave him no concern.
"Books were his horror, dinner his delight,
"And his amusement to shake hands and fight ;
"Argue he could not, but in case of doubt,
"Or disputation, fairly box'd it out. 60
"This was his logic, and his arm so strong,
"His cause prevail'd, and he was never wrong ;

GEORGE CRABBE

"But so obtuse—you must have seen his look,
"Desponding, angry, puzzled o'er his book.
"Can you not see him on the morn that proved
"His skill in figures? Pluto's self was moved—
"‘Come, six times five?’ th’ impatient teacher cried;
"In vain, the pupil shut his eyes, and sigh’d.
"‘Try, six times count your fingers; how he stands!—
"‘Your fingers, idiot!’—‘What, of both my hands?’ 70
"With parts like these his father felt assured,
"In busy times, a ship might be procured;
"He too was pleased to be so early freed:
"He now could fight, and he in time might read.
"So he has fought, and in his country’s cause
"Has gain’d him glory, and our hearts’ applause.
"No more the blustering boy a school defies;
"We see the hero from the tyrant rise,
"And in the captain’s worth the student’s dulness dies.” }
"Be all allow’d;” replied the squire, “I give 80
"Praise to his actions; may their glory live!
"Nay, I will hear him in his riper age
"Fight his good ship, and with the foe engage;
"Nor will I quit him when the cowards fly,
"Although, like them, I dread his energy.
"But still, my friend, that ancient spirit reigns;
"His powers support the credit of his brains,
"Insisting ever that he must be right,
"And for his reasons still prepared to fight.
"Let him a judge of England’s prowess be, 90
"And all her floating terrors on the sea;
"But this contents not, this is not denied;
"He claims a right on all things to decide,
"A kind of patent-wisdom; and he cries,
"‘‘Tis so!’ and bold the hero that denies.
"Thus the boy-spirit still the bosom rules,
"And the world’s maxims were at first the school’s.”
"No doubt,” said Jacques, “there are in minds the seeds
"Of good and ill, the virtues and the weeds;
"But is it not of study the intent 100
"This growth of evil nature to prevent?
"To check the progress of each idle shoot

BOYS AT SCHOOL

"That might retard the ripening of the fruit?
"Our purpose certain, and we much effect,
"We something cure, and something we correct;
"But do your utmost: when the man you see,
"You find him what you saw the boy would be,
"Disguised a little; but we still behold
"What pleased and what offended us of old.
"Years from the mind no native stain remove,
"But lay the varnish of the world above.
"Still, when he can, he loves to step aside
"And be the boy, without a check or guide;
"In the old wanderings he with pleasure strays,
"And reassumes the bliss of earlier days.

110

"I left at school the boy with pensive look,
"Whom some great patron order'd to his book;
"Who from his mother's cot reluctant came,
"And gave my lord, for this compassion, fame;
"Who, told of all his patron's merit, sigh'd,
"I know not why, in sorrow or in pride;
"And would, with vex'd and troubled spirit, cry,
"I am not happy; let your envy die.'
"Him left I with you; who, perhaps, can tell
"If fortune bless'd him, or what fate befell.
"I yet remember how the idlers ran
"To see the carriage of the godlike man,
"When pride restrain'd me; yet I thought the deed
"Was noble, too—and how did it succeed?"

120

Jacques answer'd not till he had backward cast
His view, and dwelt upon the evil past;
Then, as he sigh'd, he smil'd;—from folly rise
Such smiles, and misery will create such sighs.
And Richard now from his abstraction broke,
Listening attentive as the rector spoke.

130

"This noble lord was one disposed to try
"And weigh the worth of each new luxury;
"Now, at a certain time, in pleasant mood,

"He tried the luxury of doing good.
 "For this he chose a widow's handsome boy, 140
 "Whom he would first improve, and then employ.
 "The boy was gentle, modest, civil, kind,
 "But not for bustling through the world design'd;
 "Reserved in manner, with a little gloom,
 "Apt to retire, but never to assume;
 "Possess'd of pride that he could not subdue,
 "Although he kept his origin in view.
 "Him sent my lord to school, and this became
 "A theme for praise, and gave his lordship fame;
 "But when the boy was told how great his debt, 150
 "He proudly ask'd, 'is it contracted yet?'
 "With care he studied, and with some success;
 "His patience great, but his acquirements less:
 "Yet when he heard that Charles would not excel,
 "His lordship answer'd, with a smile, 'tis well;
 "Let him proceed, and do the best he can,
 "I want no pedant, but a useful man.'
 "The speech was heard, and praise was amply dealt,
 "His lordship felt it, and he said he felt—
 "It is delightful,' he observed, 'to raise 160
 "And foster merit—it is more than praise.'
 "Five years at school th' industrious boy had past,
 "And what,' was whisper'd, 'will be done at last?'
 "My lord was troubled, for he did not mean
 "To have his bounty watch'd and overseen;
 "Bounty that sleeps when men applaud no more
 "The generous act that waked their praise before;
 "The deed was pleasant while the praise was new,
 "But none the progress would with wonder view.
 "It was a debt contracted; he who pays 170
 "A debt is just, but must not look for praise:
 "The deed that once had fame must still proceed,
 "Though fame no more proclaims 'how great the deed!'
 "The boy is taken from his mother's side,
 "And he who took him must be now his guide.
 "But this, alas! instead of bringing fame,
 "A tax, a trouble, to my lord became.
 "'The boy is dull, you say,—why then by trade,

BOYS AT SCHOOL

"By law, by physic, nothing can be made ;
 "If a small living—mine are both too large, 180
 "And then the college is a cursed charge.
 "The sea is open ; should he there display
 "Signs of dislike, he cannot run away."
 "Now Charles, who acted no heroic part,
 "And felt no seaman's glory warm his heart,
 "Refused the offer—anger touch'd my lord.—
 "He does not like it—Good, upon my word—
 "If I at college place him, he will need
 "Supplies for ever, and will not succeed ;—
 "Doubtless in me 'tis duty to provide 190
 "Not for his comfort only, but his pride—
 "Let him to sea !"—He heard the words again,
 "With promise join'd—with threat'ning ; all in vain :
 "Charles had his own pursuits ; for aid to these
 "He had been thankful, and had tried to please ;
 "But urged again, as meekly as a saint,
 "He humbly begg'd to stay at home, and paint.
 "Yes, pay some dauber, that this stubborn fool
 "May grind his colours, and may boast his school."
 "As both persisted, 'Choose, good sir, your way,' 200
 "The peer exclaim'd, 'I have no more to say.
 "I seek your good, but I have no command
 "Upon your will, nor your desire withstand."
 "Resolved and firm, yet dreading to offend,
 "Charles pleaded *genius* with his noble friend :
 "Genius !' he cried, 'the name that triflers give
 "To their strong wishes without pains to live ;
 "Genius ! the plea of all who feel desire
 "Of fame, yet grudge the labours that acquire—
 "But say 'tis true : how poor, how late the gain, 210
 "And certain ruin if the hope be vain !'
 "Then to the world appeal'd my lord, and cried,
 "Whatever happens, I am justified.'
 "Nay, it was trouble to his soul to find
 "There was such hardness in the human mind :
 "He wash'd his hands before the world, and swore
 "That he 'such minds would patronize no more.'
 "Now Charles his bread by daily labours sought,

GEORGE CRABBE

"And this his solace, 'so Corregio wrought.'
 "Alas, poor youth! however great his name, 220
 "And humble thine, thy fortune was the same.
 "Charles drew and painted, and some praise obtain'd
 "For care and pains; but little more was gain'd:
 "Fame was his hope, and he contempt display'd
 "For approbation, when 'twas coolly paid;
 "His daily tasks he call'd a waste of mind,
 "Vex'd at his fate, and angry with mankind:
 "'Thus have the blind to merit ever done,
 "'And Genius mourn'd for each neglected son.'
 "Charles murmur'd thus, and, angry and alone, 230
 "Half breathed the curse, and half suppress'd the groan;
 "Then still more sullen grew, and still more proud;
 "Fame so refused he to himself allow'd; }
 "Crowds in contempt he held, and all to him was crowd. []
 "If aught on earth, the youth his mother loved,
 "And, at her death, to distant scenes removed.
 "Years past away, and where he lived, and how,
 "Was then unknown—indeed we know not now;
 "But once at twilight walking up and down,
 "In a poor alley of the mighty town, 240
 "Where, in her narrow courts and garrets, hide
 "The grieving sons of genius, want, and pride,
 "I met him musing; sadness I could trace,
 "And conquer'd hope's meek anguish, in his face.
 "See him I must; but I with ease address'd,
 "And neither pity nor surprise express'd;
 "I strove both grief and pleasure to restrain,
 "But yet I saw that I was giving pain.
 "He said, with quick'ning pace, as loth to hold
 "A longer converse, that 'the day was cold, 250
 "'That he was well, that I had scarcely light
 "'To aid my steps,' and bade me then good night!
 "I saw him next where he had lately come,
 "A silent pauper in a crowded room;
 "I heard his name, but he conceal'd his face,
 "To his sad mind his misery was disgrace;
 "In vain I strove to combat his disdain
 "Of my compassion——'Sir, I pray, refrain;'

BOYS AT SCHOOL

"For I had left my friends and stepp'd aside,
"Because I fear'd his unrelenting pride.

260

"He then was sitting on a workhouse-bed,
"And on the naked boards reclined his head,
"Around were children with incessant cry,
"And near was one, like him, about to die ;
"A broken chair's deal bottom held the store
"That he required—he soon would need no more ;
"A yellow tea-pot, standing at his side,
"From its half-spout the cold, black tea supplied.

"Hither, it seem'd, the fainting man was brought,
"Found without food—it was no longer sought ;
"For his employers knew not whom they paid,
"Nor where to seek him whom they wish'd to aid.
"Here brought, some kind attendant he address'd,
"And sought some trifles which he yet possess'd ;
"Then named a lightless closet, in a room
"Hired at small rate, a garret's deepest gloom.
"They sought the region, and they brought him all
"That he his own, his proper wealth could call :

270

"A better coat, less pieced ; some linen neat,
"Not whole ; and papers, many a valued sheet—
"Designs and drawings ; these, at his desire,
"Were placed before him at the chamber fire,
"And while th' admiring people stood to gaze,
"He, one by one, committed to the blaze,
"Smiling in spleen ; but one he held awhile,
"And gave it to the flames, and could not smile.

280

"The sickening man—for such appear'd the fact—
"Just in his need, would not a debt contract ;
"But left his poor apartment for the bed
"That earth might yield him, or some way-side shed ;
"Here he was found, and to this place convey'd,
"Where he might rest, and his last debt be paid :
"Fame was his wish, but he so far from fame,
"That no one knew his kindred, or his name,
"Or by what means he lived, or from what place he came. []
"Poor Charles ! unnoticed by thy titled friend,
"Thy days had calmly past, in peace thine end ;
"Led by thy patron's vanity astray,

290

327

GEORGE CRABBE

"Thy own misled thee in thy trackless way,
 "Urging thee on by hope absurd and vain, 300
 "Where never peace or comfort smiled again!
 "Once more I saw him, when his spirits fail'd,
 "And my desire to aid him then prevail'd;
 "He show'd a softer feeling in his eye,
 "And watch'd my looks, and own'd the sympathy.
 "'Twas now the calm of wearied pride; so long
 "As he had strength was his resentment strong;
 "But in such place, with strangers all around,
 "And they such strangers, to have something found
 "Allied to his own heart, an early friend— 310 }
 "One, only one, who would on him attend, []
 "To give and take a look at this his journey's end!
 "One link, however slender, of the chain
 "That held him where he could not long remain;
 "The one sole interest!—No, he could not now
 "Retain his anger; Nature knew not how;
 "And so there came a softness to his mind,
 "And he forgave the usage of mankind.
 "His cold long fingers now were press'd to mine,
 "And his faint smile of kinder thoughts gave sign; 320
 "His lips moved often as he tried to lend
 "His words their sound, and softly whisper'd 'friend!'
 "Not without comfort in the thought express'd
 "By that calm look with which he sank to rest."

"The man," said George, "you see, through life retain'd
 "The boy's defects; his virtues too remain'd."

"But where are now those minds so light and gay, }
 "So forced on study, so intent on play, []
 "Swept, by the world's rude blasts, from hope's dear views
 away? }
 "Some grieved for long neglect in earlier times, 330
 "Some sad from frailties, some lamenting crimes;
 "Thinking, with sorrow, on the season lent
 "For noble purpose, and in trifling spent;

BOYS AT SCHOOL

"And now, at last, when they in earnest view
 "The nothings done—what work they find to do!
 "Where is that virtue that the generous boy
 "Felt, and resolved that nothing should destroy?
 "He who with noble indignation glow'd
 "When vice had triumph? who his tear bestow'd
 "On injured merit? he who would possess 340
 "Power, but to aid the children of distress;
 "Who has such joy in generous actions shown,
 "And so sincere, they might be call'd his own;
 "Knight, hero, patriot, martyr! on whose tongue,
 "And potent arm, a nation's welfare hung;
 "He who to public misery brought relief,
 "And soothed the anguish of domestic grief?
 "Where now this virtue's fervour, spirit, zeal?
 "Who felt so warmly, has he ceased to feel?
 "The boy's emotions of that noble kind, 350
 "Ah! sure th' experienced man has not resign'd;
 "Or are these feelings varied? has the knight,
 "Virtue's own champion, now refused to fight?
 "Is the deliverer turn'd th' oppressor now?
 "Has the reformer dropt the dangerous vow?
 "Or has the patriot's bosom lost its heat,
 "And forced him, shivering, to a snug retreat?
 "Is such the grievous lapse of human pride?
 "Is such the victory of the worth untried?
 "Here will I pause, and then review the shame 360
 "Of Harry Bland, to hear his parent's name.
 "That mild, that modest boy, whom well we knew,
 "In him long time the secret sorrow grew;
 "He wept alone; then to his friend confess'd
 "The grievous fears that his pure mind oppress'd;
 "And thus, when terror o'er his shame obtain'd
 "A painful conquest, he his case explain'd;
 "And first his favourite question'd—'Willie, tell,
 "'Do all the wicked people go to hell?'
 "Willie with caution answer'd, 'Yes, they do, 370
 "'Or else repent; but what is this to you?'
 "'O! yes, dear friend:' he then his tale began—
 "'He fear'd his father was a wicked man,

GEORGE CRABBE

"Nor had repented of his naughty life ;
 "The wife he had indeed was not a wife,
 "Not as my mother was ; the servants all
 "Call her a name—I'll whisper what they call.
 "She saw me weep, and ask'd, in high disdain,
 "If tears could bring my mother back again ?
 "This I could bear, but not when she pretends
 "Such fond regard, and what I speak commends ;
 "Talks of my learning, fawning wretch ! and tries
 "To make me love her,—love ! when I despise.
 "Indeed I had it in my heart to say
 "Words of reproach, before I came away ;
 "And then my father's look is not the same,
 "He puts his anger on to hide his shame.'
 "With all these feelings delicate and nice,
 "This dread of infamy, this scorn of vice,
 "He left the school, accepting, though with pride,
 "His father's aid—but there would not reside ;
 "He married then a lovely maid, approved
 "Of every heart as worthy to be loved ;
 "Mild as the morn in summer, firm as truth,
 "And graced with wisdom in the bloom of youth.
 "How is it, men, when they in judgment sit
 "On the same fault, now censure, now acquit ?
 "Is it not thus, that *here* we view the sin,
 "And *there* the powerful cause that drew us in ?
 "Tis not that men are to the evil blind,
 "But that a different object fills the mind.
 "In judging others we can see too well
 "Their grievous fall, but not how grieved they fell ;
 "Judging ourselves, we to our minds recall,
 "Not how we fell, but how we grieved to fall.
 "Or could this man, so vex'd in early time,
 "By this strong feeling for his father's crime ;
 "Who to the parent's sin was barely just,
 "And mix'd with filial fear the man's disgust—
 "Could he, without some strong delusion, quit
 "The path of duty, and to shame submit ?
 "Cast off the virtue he so highly prized,
 "And be the very creature he despised ?'

BOYS AT SCHOOL

"A tenant's wife, half forward, half afraid,
"Features, it seem'd, of powerful cast display'd,
"That bore down faith and duty; common fame
"Speaks of a contract that augments the shame.

"There goes he, not unseen, so strong the will,
"And blind the wish; that bear him to the mill;
"There he degraded sits, and strives to please
"The miller's children, laughing at his knees;
"And little Dorcas, now familiar grown,
"Talks of her rich papa, and of her own.

420

"He woos the mother's now precarious smile
"By costly gifts, that tempers reconcile;
"While the rough husband, yielding to the pay
"That buys his absence, growling stalks away.
"'Tis said th' offending man will sometimes sigh,
"And say, 'My God, in what a dream am I!

"'I will awake;' but, as the day proceeds,
"The weaken'd mind the day's indulgence needs;
"Hating himself at every step he takes,

430

"His mind approves the virtue he forsakes,
"And yet forsakes her. O! how sharp the pain,
"Our vice, ourselves, our habits to disdain;
"To go where never yet in peace we went;

"To feel our hearts can bleed, yet not relent;

"To sigh, yet not recede; to grieve, yet not repent!" [] }

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK IV.

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD.

Meeting of the Brothers in the Morning—Pictures, Music, Books—The Autumnal Walk—The Farm—The Flock—Effect of Retirement upon the Mind—Dinner—Richard's Adventure at Sea—George inquires into the Education of his Brother—Richard's Account of his Occupations in his early Life: his Pursuits, Associations, Partialities, Affections and Feelings—His Love of Freedom—The Society he chose—The Friendships he engaged in—and the Habits he contracted.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK IV.

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD.

EIGHT days had past ; the Brothers now could meet
With ease, and take the customary seat.
“These,” said the host—for he perceived where stray’d
His brother’s eye, and what he now survey’d—
“These are the costly trifles that we buy,
“Urged by the strong demands of vanity,
“The thirst and hunger of a mind diseased,
“That must with purchased flattery be appeased ;
“But yet, ’tis true, the things that you behold
“Serve to amuse us as we’re getting old. 10
“These pictures, as I heard our artists say,
“Are genuine all, and I believe they may ;
“They cost the genuine sums, and I should grieve
“If, being willing, I could not believe.
“And there is music ; when the ladies come,
“With their keen looks they scrutinize the room
“To see what pleases, and I must expect
“To yield them pleasure, or to find neglect :
“For, as attractions from our person fly,
“Our purses, Richard, must the want supply ; 20
“Yet would it vex me, could the triflers know
“That they can shut out comfort or bestow.
“But see this room : here, Richard, you will find

GEORGE CRABBE

"Books for all palates, food for every mind;
 "This readers term the ever-new delight,
 "And so it is, if minds have appetite:
 "Mine once was craving; great my joy, indeed,
 "Had I possess'd such food when I could feed;
 "When at the call of every new-born wish
 "I could have keenly relish'd every dish— 30
 "Now, Richard, now, I stalk around and look
 "Upon the dress and title of a book,
 "Try half a page, and then can taste no more,
 "But the dull volume to its place restore;
 "Begin a second slowly to peruse,
 "Then cast it by, and look about for news;
 "The news itself grows dull in long debates—
 "I skip, and see what the conclusion states;
 "And many a speech, with zeal and study made
 "Cold and resisting spirits to persuade, 40
 "Is lost on mine; alone, we cease to feel
 "What crowds admire, and wonder at their zeal.
 "But how the day? No fairer will it be?
 "Walk you? Alas! 'tis requisite for me—
 "Nay, let me not prescribe—my friends and guests are free." }]

It was a fair and mild autumnal sky,
 And earth's ripe treasures met th' admiring eye,
 As a rich beauty, when her bloom is lost,
 Appears with more magnificence and cost.
 The wet and heavy grass, where feet had stray'd, 50
 Not yet erect, the wanderer's way betray'd;
 Showers of the night had swell'd the deep'ning rill;
 The morning breeze had urged the quick'ning mill;
 Assembled rooks had wing'd their sea-ward flight,
 By the same passage to return at night;
 While proudly o'er them hung the steady kite, }
 Then turn'd him back, and left the noisy throng, }]
 Nor deign'd to know them as he sail'd along.
 Long yellow leaves from oziers, strew'd around,

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD

Choked the small stream, and hush'd the feeble sound; 60
While the dead foliage dropt from loftier trees
Our squire beheld not with his wonted ease,
But to his own reflections made reply,
And said aloud, "Yes! doubtless we must die."

"We must;" said Richard, "and we would not live
"To feel what dotage and decay will give;

"But we yet taste whatever we behold:

"The morn is lovely, though the air is cold;

"There is delicious quiet in this scene,

"At once so rich, so varied, so serene;

70

"Sounds too delight us—each discordant tone

"Thus mingled please, that fail to please alone:

"This hollow wind, this rustling of the brook,

"The farm-yard noise, the woodman at yon oak—

"See, the axe falls!—now listen to the stroke!

}
[]

"That gun itself, that murders all this peace,

"Adds to the charm, because it soon must cease."

"No doubt," said George, "the country has its charms!

"My farm behold! the model for all farms!

"Look at that land—you find not there a weed,

80

"We grub the roots, and suffer none to seed.

"To land like this no botanist will come,

"To seek the precious ware he hides at home;

"Pressing the leaves and flowers with effort nice,

"As if they came from herbs in Paradise;

"Let them their favourites with my neighbours see,

"They have no—what?—no *habitat* with me.

"Now see my flock, and hear its glory;—none

"Have that vast body and that slender bone;

"They are the village boast, the dealer's theme,

90

"Fleece of such staple! flesh in such esteem!"

"Brother," said Richard, "do I hear aright?

"Does the land truly give so much delight?"

"So says my bailiff; sometimes I have tried

"To catch the joy, but nature has denied;

"It will not be—the mind has had a store

"Laid up for life, and will admit no more.

"Worn out in trials, and about to die,

"In vain to these we for amusement fly;

"We farm, we garden, we our poor employ, 100
 "And much command, though little we enjoy ;
 "Or, if ambitious, we employ our pen,
 "We plant a desert, or we drain a fen ;
 "And—here, behold my medal!—this will show
 "What men may merit when they nothing know."
 "Yet reason here," said Richard, "joins with pride :—"
 "I did not ask th' alliance," George replied—
 "I grant it true, such trifle may induce
 "A dull, proud man to wake and be of use ;
 "And there are purer pleasures, that a mind 110
 "Calm and uninjured may in villas find ;
 "But, where th' affections have been deeply tried,
 "With other food that mind must be supplied :
 "'Tis not in trees or medals to impart
 "The powerful medicine for an aching heart ;
 "The agitation dies, but there is still
 "The backward spirit, the resisting will.
 "Man takes his body to a country seat,
 "But minds, dear Richard, have their own retreat ;
 "Oft when the feet are pacing o'er the green 120
 "The mind is gone where never grass was seen,
 "And never thinks of hill, or vale, or plain,
 "Till want of rest creates a sense of pain,
 "That calls that wandering mind, and brings it home again. []
 "No more of farms ; but here I boast of minds
 "That make a friend the richer when he finds :
 "These shalt thou see ;—but, Richard, be it known,
 "Who thinks to see must in his turn be shown.—
 "But now farewell ! to thee will I resign
 "Woods, walks, and valleys ! take them till we dine." 130

The Brothers dined, and with that plenteous fare
 That seldom fails to dissipate our care,
 At least the lighter kind ; and oft prevails
 When reason, duty, nay, when kindness fails.
 Yet food and wine, and all that mortals bless,
 Lead them to think of peril and distress—
 Cold, hunger, danger, solitude, and pain,

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD

That men in life's adventurous ways sustain.

"Thou hast sail'd far, dear brother," said the 'squire—
"Permit me of these unknown lands t' inquire, 140
"Lands never till'd, where thou hast wondering been,
"And all the marvels thou hast heard and seen.
"Do tell me something of the miseries felt
"In climes where travellers freeze, and where they melt ;
"And be not nice—we know 'tis not in men
"Who travel far to hold a steady pen.
"Some will, 'tis true, a bolder freedom take,
"And keep our wonder always wide awake ;
"We know of those whose dangers far exceed
"Our frail belief, that trembles as we read : 150
"Such as in deserts burn, and thirst, and die,
"Save a last gasp that they recover by ;
"Then, too, their hazard from a tyrant's arms,
"A tiger's fury, or a lady's charms ;
"Beside th' accumulated evils borne
"From the bold outset to the safe return.
"These men abuse ; but thou hast fair pretence
"To modest dealing, and to mild good sense ;
"Then let me hear thy struggles and escapes
"In the far lands of crocodiles and apes : 160
"Say, hast thou, Bruce-like, knelt upon the bed
"Where the young Nile uplifts his branchy head ?
"Or been partaker of th' unhallow'd feast,
"Where beast-like man devours his fellow beast,
"And churn'd the bleeding life ? while each great dame
"And sovereign beauty bade adieu to shame ?
"Or did the storm, that thy wreck'd pinnace bore,
"Impel thee gasping on some unknown shore ;
"Where, when thy beard and nails were savage grown,
"Some swarthy princess took thee for her own, 170
"Some danger-dreading Yarico, who, kind,
"Sent thee away, and, prudent, staid behind ?
"Come—I am ready wonders to receive,
"Prone to assent, and willing to believe."

Richard replied : "It must be known to you,
"That tales improbable may yet be true ;
"And yet it is a foolish thing to tell

GEORGE CRABBE

"A tale that shall be judged improbable ;
"While some impossibilities appear
"So like the truth, that we assenting hear : 180
"Yet, with your leave, I venture to relate
"A chance-affair, and fact alone will state ;
"Though, I confess, it may suspicion breed,
"And you may cry, 'improbable, indeed !'

"When first I tried the sea, I took a trip,
"But duty none, in a relation's ship ;
"Thus, unengaged, I felt my spirits light,
"Kept care at distance, and put fear to flight ;
"Oft this same spirit in my friends prevail'd,
"Buoyant in dangers, rising when assail'd ; 190
"When, as the gale at evening died away—
"And die it will with the retiring day—
"Impatient then, and sick of very ease,
"We loudly whistled for the slumbering breeze.
"One eve it came ; and, frantic in my joy,
"I rose and danced, as idle as a boy :
"The cabin-lights were down, that we might learn
"A trifling something from the ship astern ;
"The stiffening gale bore up the growing wave,
"And wilder motion to my madness gave. 200
"Oft have I since, when thoughtful and at rest,
"Believed some maddening power my mind possess'd ;
"For, in an instant, as the stern sank low,
"(How moved I knew not—What can madness know ?)
"Chance that direction to my motion gave,
"And plunged me headlong in the roaring wave ;
"Swift flew the parting ship,—the fainter light
"Withdrew,—or horror took them from my sight.
"All was confused above, beneath, around ;
"All sounds of terror ; no distinguish'd sound 210
"Could reach me, now on sweeping surges tost,
"And then between the rising billows lost ;
"An undefined sensation stopp'd my breath ;
"Disorder'd views and threat'ning signs of death

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD

"Met in one moment, and a terror gave—
 "I cannot paint it—to the moving grave.
 "My thoughts were all distressing, hurried, mix'd,
 "On all things fixing, not a moment fix'd,
 "Vague thoughts of instant danger brought their pain,
 "New hopes of safety banish'd them again ; 220
 "Then the swoln billow all these hopes destroy'd,
 "And left me sinking in the mighty void.
 "Weaker I grew, and grew the more dismay'd,
 "Of aid all hopeless, yet in search of aid ;
 "Struggling awhile upon the wave to keep,
 "Then, languid, sinking in the yawning deep.
 "So tost, so lost, so sinking in despair,
 "I pray'd in heart an indirected prayer,
 "And then once more I gave my eyes to view
 "The ship now lost, and bade the light adieu ! 230
 "From my chill'd frame th' enfeebled spirit fled,
 "Rose the tall billows round my deep'ning bed,
 "Cold seized my heart, thought ceased, and I was dead. []
 "Brother, I have not—man has not, the power
 "To paint the horrors of that life-long hour—
 "Hour !—but of time I knew not—when I found
 "Hope, youth, life, love, and all they promised, drown'd ;
 "When all so indistinct, so undefined,
 "So dark and dreadful, overcame the mind ;
 "When such confusion on the spirit dwelt, 240
 "That, feeling much, it knew not what it felt.
 "Can I, my brother—ought I to forget
 "That night of terror ? No ! it threatens yet.
 "Shall I days, months—nay, years indeed neglect,
 "Who then could feel what moments must effect,
 "Were aught effected ? who, in that wild storm,
 "Found there was nothing I could well perform ;
 "For what to us are moments, what are hours,
 "If lost our judgment, and confused our powers ?
 "Oft in the times when passion strives to reign, 250
 "When duty feebly holds the slacken'd chain,
 "When reason slumbers, then remembrance draws
 "This view of death, and folly makes a pause—
 "The view o'ercomes the vice, the fear the frenzy awes. []

GEORGE CRABBE

"I know there wants not this to make it true,
"What danger bids be done, in safety do';
"Yet such escapes may make our purpose sure;
"Who slights such warning may be too secure."
"But the escape!"—"Whate'er they judged might save
"Their sinking friend they cast upon the wave; 260
"Something of these my heaven-directed arm
"Unconscious seized, and held as by a charm;
"The crew astern beheld me as I swam,
"And I am saved—O! let me say I am."

"Brother," said George, "I have neglected long
"To think of all thy perils—it was wrong;
"But do forgive me; for I could not be
"Than of myself more negligent of thee.
"Now tell me, Richard, from the boyish years
"Of thy young mind, that now so rich appears, 270
"How was it stored? 'twas told me, thou wert wild,
"A truant urchin, a neglected child.
"I heard of this escape, and sat supine
"Amid the danger that exceeded thine;
"Thou couldst but die—the waves could but infold
"Thy warm, gay heart, and make that bosom cold—
"While I—but no! Proceed, and give me truth;
"How past the years of thy unguided youth?
"Thy father left thee to the care of one
"Who could not teach, could ill support a son; 280
"Yet time and trouble feeble minds have stay'd,
"And fit for long-neglected duties made.
"I see thee struggling in the world, as late
"Within the waves, and, with an equal fate,
"By Heaven preserved—but tell me, whence and how
"Thy gleaning came?—a dexterous gleaner thou!"
"Left by that father, who was known to few,
"And to that mother, who has not her due
"Of honest fame," said Richard, "our retreat
"Was a small cottage, for our station meet, 290
"On Barford Downs; that mother, fond and poor,

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD

"There taught some truths, and bade me seek for more,
"Such as our village-school and books a few
"Supplied; but such I cared not to pursue.
"I sought the town, and to the ocean gave
"My mind and thoughts, as restless as the wave;
"Where crowds assembled, I was sure to run,
"Hear[d] what was said, and mused on what was done;
"Attentive listening in the moving scene,
"And often wondering what the men could mean. 300

"When ships at sea made signals of their need,
"I watch'd on shore the sailors, and their speed;
"Mix'd in their act, nor rested till I knew
"Why they were call'd, and what they were to do.
"Whatever business in the port was done,
"I, without call, was with the busy one;
"Not daring question, but with open ear
"And greedy spirit, ever bent to hear.

"To me the wives of seamen loved to tell
"What storms endanger'd men esteem'd so well; 310
"What wond'rous things in foreign parts they saw,
"Lands without bounds, and people without law.

"No ships were wreck'd upon that fatal beach,
"But I could give the luckless tale of each;
"Eager I look'd, till I beheld a face
"Of one disposed to paint their dismal case;
"Who gave the sad survivors' doleful tale,
"From the first brushing of the mighty gale
"Until they struck; and, suffering in their fate,
"I long'd the more they should its horrors state; 320
"While some, the fond of pity, would enjoy
"The earnest sorrows of the feeling boy.

"I sought the men return'd from regions cold,
"The frozen straits, where icy mountains roll'd;
"Some I could win to tell me serious tales
"Of boats uplifted by enormous whales,
"Or, when harpoon'd, how swiftly through the sea
"The wounded monsters with the cordage flee.
"Yet some uneasy thoughts assail'd me then:
"The monsters warr'd not with, nor wounded, men. 330
"The smaller fry we take, with scales and fins,

GEORGE CRABBE

"Who gasp and die—this adds not to our sins;
"But so much blood, warm life, and frames so large
"To strike, to murder—seem'd an heavy charge.

"They told of days, where many goes to one—
"Such days as ours; and how a larger sun,
"Red, but not flaming, roll'd, with motion slow,
"On the world's edge, and never dropt below.

"There were fond girls, who took me to their side

"To tell the story how their lovers died; 340

"They praised my tender heart, and bade me prove

"Both kind and constant when I came to love.

"In fact, I lived for many an idle year

"In fond pursuit of agitations dear;

"For ever seeking, ever pleased to find,

"The food I loved, I thought not of its kind;

"It gave affliction while it brought delight,

"And joy and anguish could at once excite.

"One gusty day, now stormy and now still,

"I stood apart upon the western hill, 350

"And saw a race at sea: a gun was heard,

"And two contending boats in sail appear'd,

"Equal awhile; then one was left behind,

"And for a moment had her chance resign'd,

"When, in that moment, up a sail they drew—

"Not used before—their rivals to pursue.

"Strong was the gale! in hurry now there came

"Men from the town, their thoughts, their fears the same;

"And women too! affrighted maids and wives,

"All deeply feeling for their sailors' lives. 360

"The strife continued; in a glass we saw

"The desperate efforts, and we stood in awe:

"When the last boat shot suddenly before,

"Then fill'd, and sank—and could be seen no more!

"Then were those piercing shrieks, that frantic flight,

"All hurried! all in tumult and affright!

"A gathering crowd from different streets drew near;

"All ask, all answer—none attend, none hear!

"One boat is safe; and see! she backs her sail

"To save the sinking—Will her care avail? 370

"O! how impatient on the sands we tread,

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD

"And the winds roaring, and the women led,
"As up and down they pace with frantic air,
"And scorn a comforter, and will despair ;
"They know not who in either boat is gone,
"But think the father, husband, lover, one.
"And who is she apart ? She dares not come
"To join the crowd, yet cannot rest at home :
"With what strong interest looks she at the waves,
"Meeting and clashing o'er the seamen's graves : 380
"Tis a poor girl betroth'd—a few hours more,
"And *he* will lie a corpse upon the shore.
"Strange, that a boy could love these scenes, and cry
"In very pity—but that boy was I.
"With pain my mother would my tales receive,
"And say, 'my Richard, do not learn to grieve.'
"One wretched hour had past before we knew
"Whom they had saved ! Alas ! they were but two,
"An orphan'd lad and widow'd man—no more !
"And they unnoticed stood upon the shore, 390
"With scarce a friend to greet them—widows view'd
"This man and boy, and then their cries renew'd ;—
"Twas long before the signs of wo gave place
"To joy again ; grief sat on every face.
"Sure of my mother's kindness, and the joy
"She felt in meeting her rebellious boy,
"I at my pleasure our new seat forsook,
"And, undirected, these excursions took :
"I often rambled to the noisy quay,
"Strange sounds to hear, and business strange to me ; 400
"Seamen and carmen, and I know not who,
"A lewd, amphibious, rude, contentious crew—
"Confused as bees appear about their hive,
"Yet all alert to keep their work alive.
"Here, unobserved as weed upon the wave,
"My whole attention to the scene I gave ;
"I saw their tasks, their toil, their care, their skill,
"Led by their own and by a master-will ;
"And, though contending, toiling, tugging on,
"The purposed business of the day was done. 410
"The open shops of craftsmen caught my eye,

GEORGE CRABBE

"And there my questions met the kind reply :

"Men, when alone, will teach ; but, in a crowd,

"The child is silent, or the man is proud ;

"But, by themselves, there is attention paid

"To a mild boy, so forward, yet afraid.

"I made me interest at the inn's fire-side,

"Amid the scenes to bolder boys denied ;

"For I had patrons there, and I was one,

"They judged, who noticed nothing that was done. 420

"A quiet lad !' would my protector say ;

"To him, now, this is better than his play :

"Boys are as men ; some active, shrewd, and keen,

"They look about if aught is to be seen ;

"And some, like Richard here, have not a mind

"That takes a notice—but the lad is kind."

"I loved in summer on the heath to walk,

"And seek the shepherd—shepherds love to talk.

"His superstition was of ranker kind,

"And he with tales of wonder stored my mind ; 430

"Wonders that he in many a lonely eve

"Had seen, himself, and therefore must believe.

"His boy, his Joe, he said, from duty ran,

"Took to the sea, and grew a fearless man :

"On yonder knoll—the sheep were in the fold—

"His spirit past me, shivering-like and cold !

"I felt a fluttering, but I knew not how,

"And heard him utter, like a whisper, 'now !'

"Soon came a letter from a friend—to tell

"That he had fallen, and the time he fell." 440

"Even to the smugglers' hut the rocks between,

"I have, adventurous in my wandering, been.

"Poor, pious Martha served the lawless tribe,

"And could their merits and their faults describe ;

"Adding her thoughts ; 'I talk, my child, to you,

"Who little think of what such wretches do."

"I loved to walk where none had walk'd before,

"About the rocks that ran along the shore ;

"Or far beyond the sight of men to stray,

"And take my pleasure when I lost my way ; 450

"For then 'twas mine to trace the hilly heath,

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD

"And all the mossy moor that lies beneath :
"Here had I favourite stations, where I stood
"And heard the murmurs of the ocean-flood,
"With not a sound beside, except when flew
"Aloft the lapwing, or the gray curlew,
"Who with wild notes my fancied power defied,
"And mock'd the dreams of solitary pride.

"I loved to stop at every creek and bay
"Made by the river in its winding way,
"And call to memory—not by marks they bare,
"But by the thoughts that were created there.

"Pleasant it was to view the sea-gulls strive
"Against the storm, or in the ocean dive,
"With eager scream, or when they dropping gave
"Their closing wings to sail upon the wave :
"Then, as the winds and waters raged around,
"And breaking billows mix'd their deafening sound,
"They on the rolling deep securely hung,
"And calmly rode the restless waves among.

"Nor pleased it less around me to behold,
"Far up the beach, the yesty sea-foam roll'd ;
"Or, from the shore upborn, to see on high
"Its frothy flakes in wild confusion fly ;
"While the salt spray that clashing billows form,
"Gave to the taste a feeling of the storm.

"Thus, with my favourite views, for many an hour
"Have I indulged the dreams of princely power ;
"When the mind, wearied by excursions bold,
"The fancy jaded, and the bosom cold,
"Or when those wants that will on kings intrude,
"Or evening-fears, broke in on solitude ;
"When I no more my fancy could employ,
"I left in haste what I could not enjoy,
"And was my gentle mother's welcome boy.

"But now thy walk,—this soft autumnal gloom
"Bids no delay—at night I will resume
"My subject, showing, not how I improved
"In my strange school, but what the things I loved,
"My first-born friendships, ties by forms uncheck'd,
"And all that boys acquire whom men neglect."

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TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK V.

RUTH.

Richard resumes his Narrative—Visits a Family in a Seaport—The Man and his Wife—Their Dwelling—Books, Number and Kind—The Friendship contracted—Employment there—Hannah, the Wife, her Manner; open Mirth and latent Grief—She gives the Story of Ruth, her Daughter—Of Thomas, a Sailor—Their Affection—A Press-gang—Reflections—Ruth disturbed in Mind—A Teacher sent to comfort her—His Fondness—Her Reception of him—Her Supplication—Is refused—She deliberates—Is decided.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK V.

RUTH.

RICHARD would wait till George the tale should ask,
Nor waited long—He then resumed the task.

“South in the port, and eastward in the street,
“Rose a small dwelling, my beloved retreat,
“Where lived a pair, then old; the sons had fled
“The home they fill’d; a part of them were dead,
“Married a part, while some at sea remain’d,
“And stillness in the seaman’s mansion reign’d;
“Lord of some petty craft, by night and day,
“The man had fish’d each fathom of the bay. 10

“My friend the matron woo’d me, quickly won,
“To fill the station of an absent son
“(Him whom at school I knew, and, Peter known,
“I took his home and mother for my own).

“I read, and doubly was I paid to hear
“Events that fell upon no listless ear:
“She grieved to say her parents could neglect
“Her education!—’twas a sore defect;
“She, who had ever such a vast delight
“To learn, and now could neither read nor write:— 20
“But hear she could, and from our stores I took,
“Librarian meet! at her desire our book.
“Full twenty volumes—I would not exceed
“The modest truth—were there for me to read;
“These a long shelf contain’d, and they were found

"Books truly speaking, volumes fairly bound ;
 "The rest—for some of other kinds remain'd,
 "And these a board beneath the shelf contain'd—
 "Had their deficiencies in part ; they lack'd
 "One side or both, or were no longer back'd ; 30
 "But now became degraded from their place,
 "And were but pamphlets of a bulkier race.
 "Yet had we pamphlets, an inviting store,
 "From sixpence downwards—nay, a part were more ;
 "Learning abundance, and the various kinds
 "For relaxation—food for different minds ;
 "A piece of Wingate—thanks for all we have—
 "What we of figures needed, fully gave ;
 "Culpepper, new in numbers, cost but thrice
 "The ancient volume's unassuming price, 40
 "But told what planet o'er each herb had power,
 "And how to take it in the lucky hour.
 "History we had—wars, treasons, treaties, crimes,
 "From Julius Cæsar to the present times ;
 "Questions and answers, teaching what to ask
 "And what reply—a kind, laborious task ;
 "A scholar's book it was, who, giving, swore
 "It held the whole he wish'd to know, and more.
 "And we had poets, hymns and songs divine ;
 "The most we read not, but allow'd them fine. 50
 "Our tracts were many, on the boldest themes—
 "We had our metaphysics, spirits, dreams,
 "Visions and warnings, and portentous sights
 "Seen, though but dimly, in the doleful nights,
 "When the good wife her wintry vigil keeps,
 "And thinks alone of him at sea, and weeps.
 "Add to all these our works in single sheets,
 "That our Cassandras sing about the streets.
 "These, as I read, the grave good man would say,
 "'Nay, Hannah !' and she answer'd 'What is Nay ?' 60
 "'What is there, pray, so hurtful in a song ?
 "'It is our fancy only makes it wrong ;
 "'His purer mind no evil thoughts alarm,
 "'And innocence protects him like a charm.'
 "Then would the matron, when the song had past,

RUTH

"And her laugh over, ask an hymn at last ;
 "To the coarse jest she would attention lend,
 "And to the pious psalm in reverence bend.
 "She gave her every power and all her mind
 "As chance directed, or as taste inclined.

70

"More of our learning I will now omit:
 "We had our Cyclopædias of Wit,
 "And all our works, rare fate, were to our genius fit.

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"When I had read, and we were weary grown
 "Of other minds, the dame disclosed her own ;
 "And long have I in pleasing terror stay'd
 "To hear of boys trepann'd, and girls betray'd ;
 "Ashamed so long to stay, and yet to go afraid.

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"I could perceive, though Hannah bore full well
 "The ills of life, that few with her would dwell,

80

"But pass away, like shadows o'er the plain
 "From flying clouds, and leave it fair again ;
 "Still every evil, be it great or small,
 "Would one past sorrow to the mind recal—
 "The grand disease of life, to which she turns,
 "And common cares and lighter suffering spurns.
 "'O! these are nothing,—they will never heed
 "'Such idle contests who have fought indeed,
 "'And have the wounds unclosed.'—I understood
 "My hint to speak, and my design pursued,
 "Curious the secret of that heart to find,
 "To mirth, to song, to laughter loud inclined,
 "And yet to bear and feel a weight of grief behind.

90

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"How does she thus her little sunshine throw
 "Always before her?—I should like to know.
 "My friend perceived, and would no longer hide
 "The bosom's sorrow—Could she not confide
 "In one who wept, unhurt—in one who felt, untried?

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"'Dear child, I show you sins and sufferings strange,
 "'But you, like Adam, must for knowledge change

100

"'That blissful ignorance: remember, then,
 "'What now you feel should be a check on men ;
 "'For then your passions no debate allow,
 "'And therefore lay up resolution now.
 "'Tis not enough, that when you can persuade

"A maid to love, you know there's promise made ;
 "'Tis not enough, that you design to keep
 "That promise made, nor leave your lass to weep :
 "But you must guard yourself against the sin,
 "And think it such to draw the party in ;
 "Nay, the more weak and easy to be won,
 "The viler you who have the mischief done.

110

"I am not angry, love ; but men should know
 "They cannot always pay the debt they owe
 "Their plighted honour ; they may cause the ill
 "They cannot lessen, though they feel a will ;
 "For *he* had truth with love, but love in youth
 "Does wrong, that cannot be repair'd by truth.
 "Ruth—I may tell, too oft had she been told—

"Was tall and fair, and comely to behold ;
 "Gentle and simple, in her native place
 "Not one compared with her in form or face ;
 "She was not merry, but she gave our hearth
 "A cheerful spirit that was more than mirth.

120

"There was a sailor boy, and people said
 "He was, as man, a likeness of the maid ;
 "But not in this—for he was ever glad,
 "While Ruth was apprehensive, mild, and sad ;
 "A quiet spirit hers, and peace would seek
 "In meditation—tender, mild, and meek !

130

"Her loved the lad most truly ; and, in truth,
 "She took an early liking to the youth ;
 "To her alone were his attentions paid,
 "And they became the bachelor and maid.
 "He wish'd to marry ; but so prudent we
 "And worldly wise, we said it could not be.
 "They took the counsel—may be they approved—
 "But still they grieved and waited, hoped and loved.

"Now, my young friend, when of such state I speak
 "As one of danger, you will be to seek :
 "You know not, Richard, where the danger lies
 "In loving hearts, kind words, and speaking eyes ;
 "For lovers speak their wishes with their looks
 "As plainly, love, as you can read your books.
 "Then, too, the meetings and the partings, all

140

RUTH

“The playful quarrels in which lovers fall,
 “Serve to one end—each lover is a child,
 “Quick to resent and to be reconciled;
 “And then their peace brings kindness that remains,
 “And so the lover from the quarrel gains. 150
 “When he has fault that she reproves, his fear
 “And grief assure her she was too severe:
 “And that brings kindness—when he bears an ill,
 “Or disappointment, and is calm and still,
 “She feels his own obedient to her will: }
 “And that brings kindness—and what kindness brings []
 “I cannot tell you;—these were trying things.
 “They were as children, and they fell at length;
 “The trial, doubtless, is beyond their strength
 “Whom grace supports not; and will grace support 160
 “The too confiding, who their danger court?
 “Then they would marry—but were now too late—
 “All could their fault in sport or malice state;
 “And though the day was fix’d, and now drew on,
 “I could perceive my daughter’s peace was gone;
 “She could not bear the bold and laughing eye }
 “That gazed on her—reproach she could not fly; []
 “Her grief she would not show, her shame could not deny;
 “For some with many virtues come to shame,
 “And some that lose them all preserve their name. 170
 “Fix’d was the day; but ere that day appear’d,
 “A frightful rumour through the place was heard;
 “War, who had slept awhile, awaked once more,
 “And gangs came pressing till they swept the shore:
 “Our youth was seized and quickly sent away,
 “Nor would the wretches for his marriage stay,
 “But bore him off, in barbarous triumph bore,
 “And left us all our miseries to deplore.
 “There were wives, maids, and mothers on the beach,
 “And some sad story appertain’d to each; 180
 “Most sad to Ruth—to neither could she go!
 “But sat apart, and suffer’d matchless wo!
 “On the vile ship they turn’d their earnest view,
 “Not one last [look] allow’d,—not one adieu!
 “They saw the men on deck, but none distinctly knew. []

GEORGE CRABBE

“And there she staid, regardless of each eye,
 “With but one hope, a fervent hope to die.
 “Nor cared she now for kindness—all beheld
 “Her, who invited none, and none repell’d;
 “For there are griefs, my child, that sufferers hide, 190
 “And there are griefs that men display with pride;
 “But there are other griefs that, so we feel,
 “We care not to display them nor conceal:
 “Such were our sorrows on that fatal day,
 “More than our lives the spoilers tore away;
 “Nor did we heed their insult—some distress
 “No form or manner can make more or less,
 “And this is of that kind—this misery of a press! }
 “They say such things must be—perhaps they must; []
 “But, sure, they need not fright us and disgust; 200
 “They need not soul-less crews of ruffians send
 “At once the ties of humble love to rend.
 “A single day had Thomas stay’d on shore,
 “He might have wedded, and we ask’d no more;
 “And that stern man, who forced the lad away,
 “Might have attended, and have graced the day;
 “His pride and honour might have been at rest,
 “It is no stain to make a couple blest!
 “Blest!—no, alas! it was to ease the heart
 “Of one sore pang, and then to weep and part! 210
 “But this he would not.—English seamen fight
 “For England’s gain and glory—it is right;
 “But will that public spirit be so strong,
 “Fill’d, as it must be, with their private wrong?
 “Forbid it, honour, one in all the fleet
 “Should hide in war, or from the foe retreat!
 “But is it just, that he who so defends
 “His country’s cause, should hide him from her friends?
 “Sure, if they must upon our children seize,
 “They might prevent such injuries as these; 220
 “Might hours—nay, days—in many a case allow,
 “And soften all the griefs we suffer now.
 “Some laws, some orders might in part redress
 “The licensed insults of a British press,
 “That keeps the honest and the brave in awe,

RUTH

"Where might is right, and violence is law.
 "Be not alarm'd, my child; there's none regard
 "What you and I conceive so cruel-hard:
 "There is compassion, I believe; but still
 "One wants the power to help, and one the will, 230
 "And so from war to war the wrongs remain,
 "While Reason pleads, and Misery sighs, in vain.
 "Thus my poor Ruth was wretched and undone,
 "Nor had an husband for her only son,
 "Nor had he father; hope she did awhile,
 "And would not weep, although she could not smile;
 "Till news was brought us that the youth was slain,
 "And then, I think, she never smiled again;
 "Or if she did, it was but to express
 "A feeling far, indeed, from happiness! 240
 "Something that her bewilder'd mind conceived,
 "When she inform'd us that she never grieved,
 "But was right merry, then her head was wild,
 "And grief had gain'd possession of my child.
 "Yet, though bewilder'd for a time, and prone
 "To ramble much and speak aloud, alone;
 "Yet did she all that duty ever ask'd
 "And more, her will self-govern'd and untask'd.
 "With meekness bearing all reproach, all joy
 "To her was lost; she wept upon her boy, 250
 "Wish'd for his death, in fear that he might live
 "New sorrow to a burden'd heart to give.
 "There was a teacher, where my husband went—
 "Sent, as he told the people—what he meant
 "You cannot understand, but—he was sent. }
 "This man from meeting came, and strove to win []
 "Her mind to peace by drawing off the sin,
 "Or what it was, that, working in her breast,
 "Robb'd it of comfort, confidence, and rest.
 "He came and reason'd, and she seem'd to feel 260
 "The pains he took—her griefs began to heal;
 "She ever answer'd kindly when he spoke,
 "And always thank'd him for the pains he took;
 "So, after three long years, and all the while
 "Wrapt up in grief, she blest us with a smile,

GEORGE CRABBE

"And spoke in comfort ; but she mix'd no more
 "With younger persons, as she did before.
 "Still Ruth was pretty ; in her person neat ;
 "So thought the teacher, when they chanced to meet.
 "He was a weaver by his worldly trade, 270
 "But powerful work in the assemblies made ;
 "People came leagues to town to hear him sift
 "The holy text,—he had the grace and gift ;
 "Widows and maidens flock'd to hear his voice ;
 "Of either kind he might have had his choice ;—
 "But he had chosen—we had seen how shy
 "The girl was getting, my good man and I ;
 "That when the weaver came, she kept with us,
 "Where he his points and doctrines might discuss ;
 "But in our bit of garden, or the room 280
 "We call our parlour, there he must not come.
 "She loved him not, and though she could attend
 "To his discourses as her guide and friend,
 "Yet now to these she gave a listless ear,
 "As if a friend she would no longer hear ;
 "This might he take for woman's art, and cried,
 "'Spouse of my heart, I must not be denied !'—
 "Fearless he spoke, and I had hope to see
 "My girl a wife—but this was not to be.
 "'My husband, thinking of his worldly store, 290
 "And not, frail man, enduring to be poor,
 "Seeing his friend would for his child provide
 "And hers, he grieved to have the man denied ;
 "For Ruth, when press'd, rejected him, and grew
 "To her old sorrow, as if that were new.
 "'Who shall support her ?' said her father, 'how
 "'Can I, infirm and weak as I am now ?
 "'And here a loving fool'—this gave her pain
 "Severe, indeed, but she would not complain ;
 "Nor would consent, although the weaver grew 300
 "More fond, and would the frighten'd girl pursue.
 "'O ! much she begg'd him to forbear, to stand
 "Her soul's kind friend, and not to ask her hand :
 "She could not love him.—'Love me !' he replied,
 "'The love you mean is love unsanctified,

RUTH

“‘An earthly, wicked, sensual, sinful kind,
 “‘A creature-love, the passion of the blind.’
 “‘He did not court her, he would have her know,
 “‘For that poor love that will on beauty grow ;
 “‘No! he would take her as the prophet took 310
 “‘One of the harlots in the holy book ;
 “‘And then he look’d so ugly and severe!
 “‘And yet so fond—she could not hide her fear.
 “‘This fondness grew her torment ; she would fly
 “‘In woman’s terror, if he came but nigh ;
 “‘Nor could I wonder he should odious prove,
 “‘So like a ghost that left a grave for love.
 “‘But still her father lent his cruel aid
 “‘To the man’s hope, and she was more afraid :
 “‘He said, no more she should his table share, 320
 “‘But be the parish or the teacher’s care.
 “‘Three days I give you : see that all be right
 “‘On Monday-morning—this is Thursday-night—
 “‘Fulfil my wishes, girl! or else forsake my sight!’ } []
 “‘I see her now ; and, she that was so meek
 “‘It was a chance that she had power to speak,
 “‘Now spoke in earnest—‘Father! I obey,
 “‘And will remember the appointed day!’
 “‘Then came the man : she talk’d with him apart,
 “‘And, I believe, laid open all her heart ; 330
 “‘But all in vain—she said to me, in tears,
 “‘Mother! that man is not what he appears :
 “‘He talks of heaven, and let him, if he will,
 “‘But he has earthly purpose to fulfil ;
 “‘Upon my knees I begg’d him to resign
 “‘The hand he asks—he said, ‘it shall be mine.
 “‘What! did the holy men of Scripture deign
 “‘To hear a woman when she said ‘refrain?’
 “‘Of whom they chose they took them wives, and these
 “‘Made it their study and their wish to please ; 340
 “‘The women then were faithful and afraid,
 “‘As Sarah Abraham, they their lords obey’d,
 “‘And so she styled him ; ’tis in later days
 “‘Of foolish love that we our women praise,
 “‘Fall on the knee, and raise the suppliant hand,

GEORGE CRABBE

““And court the favour that we might command.”

““O! my dear mother, when this man has power,

““How will he treat me—first may beasts devour!

““Or death in every form that I could prove,

““Except this selfish being’s hateful love.”

350

““I gently blamed her, for I knew how hard

““It is to force affection and regard.

““Ah! my dear lad, I talk to you as one

““Who knew the misery of an heart undone;

““You know it not; but, dearest boy, when man,

““Do not an ill because you find you can.

““Where is the triumph? when such things men seek,

““They only drive to wickedness the weak.

““Weak was poor Ruth, and this good man so hard,

““That to her weakness he had no regard;

360

““But we had two days peace; he came, and then

““My daughter whisper’d, ‘Would there were no men!

““None to admire or scorn us, none to vex

““A simple, trusting, fond, believing sex;

““Who truly love the worth that men profess,

““And think too kindly for their happiness.”

““Poor Ruth! few heroines in the tragic page

““Felt more than thee in thy contracted stage;

““Fair, fond, and virtuous, they our pity move,

““Impell’d by duty, agonized by love;

370

““But no Mandane, who in dread has knelt

““On the bare boards, has greater terrors felt,

““Nor been by warring passions more subdued

““Than thou, by this man’s groveling wish pursued;

““Doom’d to a parent’s judgment, all unjust,

““Doom’d the chance mercy of the world to trust,

““Or to wed grossness and conceal disgust.

}
[]

““If Ruth was frail, she had a mind too nice

““To wed with that which she beheld as vice;

““To take a reptile, who, beneath a show

380

““Of peevish zeal, let carnal wishes grow;

““Proud and yet mean, forbidding and yet full

““Of eager appetites, devout and dull;

““Waiting a legal right that he might seize

““His own, and his impatient spirit ease;

356

RUTH

“Who would at once his pride and love indulge,

“His temper humour, and his spite divulge.

“This the poor victim saw—a second time,

“Sighing, she said, ‘Shall I commit the crime,

“‘And now untempted? Can the form or rite

390

“‘Make me a wife in my Creator’s sight?

“‘Can I the words without a meaning say?

“‘Can I pronounce love, honour, or obey?

“‘And if I cannot, shall I dare to wed,

“‘And go an harlot to a loathed bed?

“‘Never, dear mother! my poor boy and I

“‘Will at the mercy of a parish lie:

“‘Reproved for wants that vices would remove,

“‘Reproach’d for vice that I could never love,

“‘Mix’d with a crew long wedded to disgrace,

400

“‘A vulgar, forward, equalizing race—

“‘And am I doom’d to beg a dwelling in that place?’ []

“Such was her reasoning: many times she weigh’d

“The evils all, and was of each afraid;

“She loath’d the common board, the vulgar seat,

“Where shame, and want, and vice, and sorrow meet,

“Where frailty finds allies, where guilt insures retreat. []

“But peace again is fled; the teacher comes,

“And new importance, haughtier air assumes.

“No hapless victim of a tyrant’s love

410

“More keenly felt, or more resisting strove

“Against her fate; she look’d on every side,

“But there were none to help her, none to guide;—

“And he, the man who should have taught the soul,

“Wish’d but the body in his base control.

“She left her infant on the Sunday morn,

“A creature doom’d to shame! in sorrow born;

“A thing that languish’d, nor arrived at age

“When the man’s thoughts with sin and pain engage—

“She came not home to share our humble meal,

420

“Her father thinking what his child would feel

“From his hard sentence—still she came not home.

“The night grew dark, and yet she was not come;

“The east-wind roar’d, the sea return’d the sound,

“And the rain fell as if the world were drown’d;

“There were no lights without, and my good man,

"To kindness frighten'd, with a groan began
 "To talk of Ruth, and pray; and then he took
 "The Bible down, and read the holy book;
 "For he had learning; and when that was done 430
 "We sat in silence—whither could we run?
 "We said, and then rush'd frighten'd from the door,
 "For we could bear our own conceit no more;
 "We call'd on neighbours—there she had not been;
 "We met some wanderers—ours they had not seen;
 "We hurried o'er the beach, both north and south,
 "Then join'd, and wander'd to our haven's mouth,
 "Where rush'd the falling waters wildly out:
 "I scarcely heard the good man's fearful shout,
 "Who saw a something on the billow ride, 440
 "And 'Heaven have mercy on our sins!' he cried,
 "'It is my child!' and to the present hour
 "So he believes—and spirits have the power.
 "And she was gone! the waters wide and deep
 "Roll'd o'er her body as she lay asleep.
 "She heard no more the angry waves and wind,
 "She heard no more the threat'ning of mankind;
 "Wrapt in dark weeds, the refuse of the storm,
 "To the hard rock was borne her comely form!
 "But O! what storm was in that mind? what strife, 450
 "That could compel her to lay down her life?
 "For she was seen within the sea to wade,
 "By one at distance, when she first had pray'd;
 "Then to a rock within the hither shoal
 "Softly and with a fearful step she stole;
 "Then, when she gain'd it, on the top she stood
 "A moment still—and dropt into the flood!
 "The man cried loudly, but he cried in vain—
 "She heard not then—she never heard again!
 "She had—pray, Heav'n!—she had that world in sight, 460
 "Where frailty mercy finds, and wrong has right;
 "But, sure, in this her portion such has been,
 "Well had it still remain'd a world unseen!
 "Thus far the dame: the passions will dispense
 "To such a wild and rapid eloquence—
 "Will to the weakest mind their strength impart,
 "And give the tongue the language of the heart."

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK VI.

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD, CONCLUDED.

Richard relates his Illness and Retirement—A Village Priest and his two Daughters—His peculiar Studies—His Simplicity of Character—Arrival of a third Daughter—Her Zeal in his Conversion—Their Friendship—How terminated—An happy Day—Its Commencement and Progress—A Journey along the Coast—Arrival as a Guest—Company—A Lover's Jealousy—it increases—dies away—An Evening Walk—Suspense—Apprehension—Resolution—Certainty.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK VI.

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD, CONCLUDED.

“THIS then, dear Richard, was the way you took
“To gain instruction—thine a curious book,
“Containing much of both the false and true;
“But thou hast read it, and with profit too.
“Come, then, my Brother, now thy tale complete—
“I know thy first embarking in the fleet,
“Thy entrance in the army, and thy gain
“Of plenteous laurels in the wars in Spain,
“And what then follow’d; but I wish to know
“When thou that heart hadst courage to bestow, 10
“When to declare it gain’d, and when to stand
“Before the priest, and give the plighted hand;
“So shall I boldness from thy frankness gain
“To paint the frenzy that possess’d my brain;
“For rather there than in my heart I found
“Was my disease; a poison, not a wound,
“A madness, Richard—but, I pray thee, tell
“Whom hast thou loved so dearly and so well?”

The younger man his gentle host obey’d,
For some respect, though not required, was paid; 20
Perhaps with all that independent pride
Their different states would to the memory glide;

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD

Yet was his manner unconstrain'd and free,
And nothing in it like servility.

Then he began :—"When first I reach'd the land,

"I was so ill that death appear'd at hand ;

"And, though the fever left me, yet I grew

"So weak 'twas judg'd that life would leave me too.

"I sought a village-priest, my mother's friend,

"And I believed with him my days would end :

30

"The man was kind, intelligent, and mild,

"Careless and shrewd, yet simple as the child ;

"For of the wisdom of the world his share

"And mine were equal—neither had to spare ;

"Else—with his daughters, beautiful and poor—

"He would have kept a sailor from his door.

"Two then were present, who adorn'd his home,

"But ever speaking of a third to come ;

"Cheerful they were, not too reserved or free,

"I loved them both, and never wish'd them three.

40

"The vicar's self, still further to describe,

"Was of a simple, but a studious tribe ;

"He from the world was distant, not retired,

"Nor of it much possess'd, nor much desired :

"Grave in his purpose, cheerful in his eye,

"And with a look of frank benignity.

"He lost his wife when they together past

"Years of calm love, that triumph'd to the last.

"He much of nature, not of man, had seen,

"Yet his remarks were often shrewd and keen ;

50

"Taught not by books t' approve or to condemn,

"He gain'd but little that he knew from them ;

"He read with reverence and respect the few,

"Whence he his rules and consolations drew ;

"But men and beasts, and all that lived or moved,

"Were books to him ; he studied them and loved.

"He knew the plants in mountain, wood, or mead ;

"He knew the worms that on the foliage feed ;

"Knew the small tribes that 'scape the careless eye,

"The plant's disease that breeds the embryo-fly ;

60

"And the small creatures who on bark or bough

"Enjoy their changes, changed we know not how ;

361

GEORGE CRABBE

"But now th' imperfect being scarcely moves,
 "And now takes wing and seeks the sky it loves.
 "He had no system, and forbore to read
 "The learned labours of th' immortal Swede;
 "But smiled to hear the creatures he had known
 "So long, were now in class and order shown,
 "Genus and species—'is it meet,' said he,
 "'This creature's name should one so sounding be? 70
 "'Tis but a fly, though first-born of the spring—
 "'Bombylius majus, dost thou call the thing?
 "'Majus, indeed! and yet, in fact, 'tis true,
 "'We all are majors, all are minors too, }
 "'Except the first and last—th' immensely distant two. []
 "'And here again—what call the learned this?
 "'Both Hippobosca and Hirundinis?
 "'Methinks the creature should be proud to find
 "'That he employs the talents of mankind;
 "'And that his sovereign master shrewdly looks, 80
 "'Counts all his parts, and puts them in his books.
 "'Well! go thy way, for I do feel it shame
 "'To stay a being with so proud a name.'
 "Such were his daughters, such my quiet friend,
 "And pleasant was it thus my days to spend;
 "But when Matilda at her home I saw,
 "Whom I beheld with anxiousness and awe,
 "The ease and quiet that I found before
 "At once departed, and return'd no more.
 "No more their music soothed me as they play'd, 90
 "But soon her words a strong impression made:
 "The sweet enthusiast, so I deem'd her, took
 "My mind, and fix'd it to her speech and look;
 "My soul, dear girl! she made her constant care,
 "But never whisper'd to my heart 'beware!' }
 "In love no dangers rise till we are in the snare. []
 "Her father sometimes question'd of my creed,
 "And seem'd to think it might amendment need;
 "But great the difference when the pious maid
 "To the same errors her attention paid: 100
 "Her sole design that I should think aright,
 "And my conversion her supreme delight.

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD

"Pure was her mind, and simple her intent,
"Good all she sought, and kindness all she meant.
"Next to religion friendship was our theme,
"Related souls and their refined esteem.
"We talk'd of scenes where this is real found,
"And love subsists without a dart or wound ;
"But there intruded thoughts not all serene,
"And wishes not so calm would intervene."
"Saw not her father?"

110

"Yes ; but saw no more
"Than he had seen without a fear before :
"He had subsisted by the church and plough,
"And saw no cause for apprehension now.
"We, too, could live ; he thought not passion wrong,
"But only wonder'd we delay'd so long.
"More had he wonder'd had he known esteem
"Was all we mention'd, friendship was our theme.—
"Laugh, if you please, I must my tale pursue—
"This sacred friendship thus in secret grew
"An intellectual love, most tender, chaste, and true ;
"Unstain'd, we said ; nor knew we how it chanced
"To gain some earthly soil as it advanced ;
"But yet my friend, and she alone, could prove
"How much it differ'd from romantic love—
"But this and more I pass—No doubt, at length,
"We could perceive the weakness of our strength.

120 }
[]

"O ! days remember'd well ! remember'd all !
"The bitter-sweet, the honey and the gall ;
"Those garden rambles in the silent night,
"Those trees so shady, and that moon so bright ;
"That thickset alley, by the arbour closed,
"That woodbine seat where we at last reposed ;
"And then the hopes that came and then were gone,
"Quick as the clouds beneath the moon past on.
"Now, in this instant, shall my love be shown,
"I said—O ! no, the happy time is flown !

130

"You smile ; remember, I was weak and low,
"And fear'd the passion as I felt it grow :
"Will she, I said, to one so poor attend,
"Without a prospect, and without a friend ?

140

"I dared not ask her—till a rival came,

"But hid the secret, slow-consuming flame.

"I once had seen him; then familiar, free,

"More than became a common guest to be;

"And sure, I said, he has a look of pride

"And inward joy—a lover satisfied.

"Can you not, Brother, on adventures past

"A thought, as on a lively prospect, cast?

"On days of dear remembrance! days that seem, 150

"When past—nay, even when present—like a dream?

"These white and blessed days, that softly shine

"On few, nor oft on them—have they been thine?"

George answer'd, "Yes! dear Richard, through the years

"Long past, a day so white and mark'd appears.

"As in the storm that pours destruction round,

"Is here and there a ship in safety found:

"So in the storms of life some days appear

"More blest and bright for the preceding fear.

"These times of pleasure that in life arise, 160

"Like spots in deserts, that delight, surprise,

"And to our wearied senses give the more,

"For all the waste behind us and before—

"And thou, dear Richard, hast then had thy share

"Of those enchanting times that baffle care?"

"Yes, I have felt this life-refreshing gale

"That bears us onward when our spirits fail;

"That gives those spirits vigour and delight—

"I would describe it, could I do it right.

"Such days have been—a day of days was one 170

"When, rising gaily with the rising sun,

"I took my way to join a happy few,

"Known not to me, but whom Matilda knew,

"To whom she went a guest, and message sent:

"‘Come thou to us;’ and as a guest I went.

"There are two ways to Brandon—by the heath

"Above the cliff, or on the sand beneath,

"Where the small pebbles, wetted by the wave,

"To the new day reflected lustre gave.

"At first above the rocks I made my way, 180

"Delighted looking at the spacious bay,

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD

"And the large fleet that to the northward steer'd
"Full sail, that glorious in my view appear'd ;
"For where does man evince his full control
"O'er subject matter, where displays the soul
"Its mighty energies with more effect
"Than when her powers that moving mass direct ?
"Than when man guides the ship man's art has made,
"And makes the winds and waters yield him aid ?
"Much as I long'd to see the maid I loved, 190
"Through scenes so glorious I at leisure moved ;
"For there are times when we do not obey
"The master-passion—when we yet delay—
"When absence, soon to end, we yet prolong,
"And dally with our wish although so strong.
"High were my joys, but they were sober too,
"Nor reason spoil'd the pictures fancy drew ;
"I felt—rare feeling in a world like this—
"The sober certainty of waking bliss ;
"Add too the smaller aids to happy men, 200
"Convenient helps—these too were present then.
"But what are spirits ? light indeed and gay
"They are, like winter flowers, nor last a day ;
"Comes a rude icy wind—they feel, and fade away. }
"High beat my heart when to the house I came, []
"And when the ready servant gave my name ;
"But when I enter'd that pernicious room,
"Gloomy it look'd, and painful was the gloom ;
"And jealous was the pain, and deep the sigh
"Caused by this gloom, and pain, and jealousy : 210
"For there Matilda sat, and her beside
"That rival soldier, with a soldier's pride ;
"With self-approval in his laughing face,
"His seem'd the leading spirit of the place.
"She was all coldness—yet I thought a look,
"But that corrected, tender welcome spoke :
"It was as lightning which you think you see,
"But doubt, and ask if lightning it could be.
"Confused and quick my introduction pass'd,
"When I, a stranger and on strangers cast, 220
"Beheld the gallant man as he display'd

GEORGE CRABBE

"Uncheck'd attention to the guilty maid.
 "O! how it grieved me that she dared t' excite
 "Those looks in him that show'd so much delight;
 "Egregious coxcomb! there—he smiled again,
 "As if he sought to aggravate my pain;
 "Still she attends—I must approach—and find,
 "Or make, a quarrel, to relieve my mind.

"In vain I try—politeness as a shield
 "The angry strokes of my contempt repell'd; 230
 "Nor must I violate the social law
 "That keeps the rash and insolent in awe.
 "Once I observed, on hearing my replies,
 "The woman's terror fix'd on me the eyes
 "That look'd entreaty; but the guideless rage
 "Of jealous minds no softness can assuage.
 "But, lo! they rise, and all prepare to take
 "The promised pleasure on the neighbouring lake.

"Good heaven! they whisper! Is it come to this?
 "Already!—then may I my doubt dismiss: 240
 "Could he so soon a timid girl persuade?
 "What rapid progress has the coxcomb made!
 "And yet how cool her looks, and how demure!
 "The falling snow nor lily's flower so pure—
 "What can I do? I must the pair attend,
 "And watch this horrid business to its end.

"There, forth they go! He leads her to the shore—
 "Nay, I must follow—I can bear no more:
 "What can the handsome gipsy have in view
 "In trifling thus, as she appears to do? 250
 "I, who for months have labour'd to succeed,
 "Have only lived her vanity to feed.

"O! you will make me room—'tis very kind,
 "And meant for him—it tells him he must mind;
 "Must not be careless:—I can serve to draw
 "The soldier on, and keep the man in awe.
 "O! I did think she had a guileless heart,
 "Without deceit, capriciousness, or art;
 "And yet a stranger, with a coat of red,
 "Has, by an hour's attention, turn'd her head. 260
 "Ah! how delicious was the morning-drive,

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD

"The soul awaken'd, and its hopes alive ;
"How dull this scene by trifling minds enjoy'd,
"The heart in trouble and its hope destroy'd.

"Well, now we land—And will he yet support
"This part? What favour has he now to court?
"Favour! O, no! He means to quit the fair;
"How strange! how cruel! Will she not despair?

"Well! take her hand—no further if you please,
"I cannot suffer fooleries like these:—
"How? 'Love to Julia!' to his wife?—O! dear
"And injured creature, how must I appear,
"Thus haughty in my looks, and in my words severe? []

"Her love to Julia, to the school-day friend
"To whom those letters she has lately penn'd!
"Can she forgive? And now I think again,
"The man was neither insolent nor vain;
"Good humour chiefly would a stranger trace,
"Were he impartial, in the air or face;
"And I so splenetic the whole way long,
"And she so patient—it was very wrong.

"The boat had landed in a shady scene;
"The grove was in its glory, fresh and green;
"The showers of late had swell'd the branch and bough,
"And the sun's fervour made them pleasant now.
"Hard by, an oak arose in all its pride,
"And threw its arms along the water's side:
"Its leafy limbs, that on the glassy lake
"Stretch far, and all those dancing shadows make.

"And now we walk—now smaller parties seek
"Or sun or shade as pleases—Shall I speak?
"Shall I forgiveness ask, and then apply
"For—O! that vile and intercepting cry!
"Alas! what mighty ills can trifles make—
"An hat! the idiot's—fallen in the lake!
"What serious mischief can such idlers do?
"I almost wish the head had fallen too.

"No more they leave us, but will hover round,
"As if amusement at our cost they found;
"Vex'd and unhappy I indeed had been,
"Had I not something in my charmer seen

GEORGE CRABBE

"Like discontent, that, though corrected, dwelt
 "On that dear face, and told me what she felt.
 "Now must we cross the lake, and as we cross'd
 "Was my whole soul in sweet emotion lost;
 "Clouds in white volumes roll'd beneath the moon,
 "Softening her light that on the waters shone:
 "This was such bliss! even then it seem'd relief
 "To veil the gladness in a show of grief.
 "We sigh'd as we conversed, and said, how deep 310
 "This lake on which those broad dark shadows sleep;
 "There is between us and a watery grave
 "But a thin plank, and yet our fate we brave.
 "'What if it burst?' 'Matilda, then my care
 "'Would be for thee: all danger I would dare,
 "'And, should my efforts fail, thy fortune would I share.' }
 "'The love of life,' she said, 'would powerful prove!'—
 "'O! not so powerful as the strength of love.'—
 "A look of kindness gave the grateful maid,
 "That had the real effort more than paid. 320
 "But here we land, and haply now may choose
 "Companions home—our way, too, we may lose:
 "In these drear, dark, inosculating lanes,
 "The very native of his doubt complains;
 "No wonder then that in such lonely ways
 "A stranger, heedless of the country, strays;
 "A stranger, too, whose many thoughts all meet
 "In one design, and none regard his feet.
 "'Is this the path?' the cautious fair one cries;
 "I answer, 'Yes!'—'We shall our friends surprise,' 330
 "She added, sighing—I return the sighs. }
 "'Will they not wonder?' 'O! they would, indeed,
 "'Could they the secrets of this bosom read,
 "'These chilling doubts, these trembling hopes I feel!
 "'The faint, fond hopes I can no more conceal—
 "'I love thee, dear Matilda!—to confess
 "'The fact is dangerous, fatal to suppress.
 "'And now in terror I approach the home
 "'Where I may wretched but not doubtful come;
 "'Where I must be all ecstasy, or all—
 "'O! what will you a wretch rejected call? 340

ADVENTURES OF RICHARD

"Not man, for I shall lose myself, and be
 "A creature lost to reason, losing thee.
 "Speak, my Matilda! on the rack of fear
 "Suspend me not—I would my sentence hear,
 "Would learn my fate—Good Heaven! and what portend
 "These tears?—and fall they for thy wretched friend?
 "Or'—but I cease; I cannot paint the bliss,
 "From a confession soft and kind as this;
 "Nor where we walk'd, nor how our friends we met, 350 }
 "Or what their wonder—I am wondering yet;
 "For he who nothing heeds has nothing to forget. []
 "All thought, yet thinking nothing—all delight
 "In every thing, but nothing in my sight!
 "Nothing I mark or learn, but am possess'd
 "Of joys I cannot paint, and I am bless'd }
 "In all that I conceive—whatever is, is best. []
 "Ready to aid all beings, I would go
 "The world around to succour human wo;
 "Yet am so largely happy, that it seems 360
 "There are no woes, and sorrows are but dreams.
 "There is a college joy, to scholars known,
 "When the first honours are proclaim'd their own;
 "There is ambition's joy, when in their race
 "A man surpassing rivals gains his place;
 "There is a beauty's joy, amid a crowd
 "To have that beauty her first fame allow'd;
 "And there's the conqueror's joy, when, dubious held
 "And long the fight, he sees the foe repell'd.
 "But what are these, or what are other joys, 370
 "That charm kings, conquerors, beauteous nymphs and boys,
 "Or greater yet, if greater yet be found,
 "To that delight when love's dear hope is crown'd?
 "To the first beating of a lover's heart,
 "When the loved maid endeavours to impart,
 "Frankly yet faintly, fondly yet in fear,
 "The kind confession that he holds so dear?
 "Now in the morn of our return how strange
 "Was this new feeling, this delicious change;
 "That sweet delirium, when I gazed in fear, 380
 "That all would yet be lost and disappear.

GEORGE CRABBE

“Such was the blessing that I sought for pain,
“In some degree to be myself again ;
“And when we met a shepherd old and lame,
“Cold and diseased, it seem’d my blood to tame ;
“And I was thankful for the moral sight,
“That soberized the vast and wild delight.”

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK VII.

THE ELDER BROTHER.

Conversation—Story of the elder Brother—His romantic Views and Habits—The Scene of his Meditations—Their Nature—Interrupted by an Adventure—The Consequences of it—A strong and permanent Passion—Search of its Object—Long ineffectual—How found—The first Interview—The second—End of the Adventure—Retirement.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK VII.

THE ELDER BROTHER.

"**T**HANKS, my dear Richard; and, I pray thee, deign
"To speak the truth—does all this love remain,
"And all this joy? for views and flights sublime,
"Ardent and tender, are subdued by time.
"Speakest thou of her to whom thou madest thy vows,
"Of my fair sister, of thy lawful spouse?
"Or art thou talking some frail love about,
"The rambling fit, before th' abiding gout?"
"Nay, spare me, Brother, an adorer spare:
"Love and the gout! thou wouldst not these compare?" 10
"Yea, and correctly; teasing ere they come,
"They then confine their victim to his home:
"In both are previous feints and false attacks,
"Both place the grieving patient on their racks:
"They both are ours, with all they bring, for life,
"Tis not in us t' expel or gout or wife;
"On man a kind of dignity they shed,
"A sort of gloomy pomp about his bed;
"Then, if he leaves them, go where'er he will,
"They have a claim upon his body still;
"Nay, when they quit him, as they sometimes do,
"What is there left t' enjoy or to pursue?—
"But dost thou love this woman?"

"O! beyond

THE ELDER BROTHER

"What I can tell thee of the true and fond:
"Hath she not soothed me, sick, enrich'd me, poor,
"And banish'd death and misery from my door?
"Has she not cherish'd every moment's bliss,
"And made an Eden of a world like this?
"When Care would strive with us his watch to keep,
"Has she not sung the snarling fiend to sleep? 30
"And when Distress has look'd us in the face,
"Has she not told him, 'thou art not Disgrace?'"

"I must behold her, Richard; I must see
"This patient spouse who sweetens misery—
"But didst thou need, and wouldst thou not apply?—
"Nay thou wert right—but then how wrong was I!"
"My indiscretion was——"

"No more repeat;
"Would I were nothing worse than indiscreet;—
"But still there is a plea that I could bring,
"Had I the courage to describe the thing." 40
"Then, thou too, Brother, couldst of weakness tell;
"Thou, too, hast found the wishes that rebel
"Against the sovereign reason; at some time
"Thou hast been fond, heroic, and sublime;
"Wrote verse, it may be, and for one dear maid
"The sober purposes of life delay'd;
"From year to year the fruitless chase pursued,
"And hung enamour'd o'er the flying good.
"Then, be thy weakness to a Brother shown,
"And give him comfort who displays his own." 50
"Ungenerous youth! dost thou presuming ask
"A man so grave his failings to unmask?
"What if I tell thee of a waste of time,
"That on my spirit presses as a crime,
"Wilt thou despise me?—I, who, soaring, fell
"So late to rise—Hear then the tale I tell;
"Who tells what thou shalt hear, esteems his hearer well. }

"Yes, my dear Richard, thou shalt hear me own
"Follies and frailties thou hast never known;

GEORGE CRABBE

"Thine was a frailty,—folly, if you please— 60
 "But mine a flight, a madness, a disease.
 "Turn with me to my twentieth year, for then
 "The lover's frenzy ruled the poet's pen ;
 "When virgin reams were soil'd with lays of love,
 "The flinty hearts of fancied nymphs to move :
 "Then was I pleased in lonely ways to tread,
 "And muse on tragic tales of lovers dead ;
 "For all the merit I could then descry
 "In man or woman was for love to die.
 "I mused on charmers chaste, who pledged their truth, 70
 "And left no more the once-accepted youth ;
 "Though he disloyal, lost, diseased, became,
 "The widow'd turtle's was a deathless flame.
 "This faith, this feeling, gave my soul delight :
 "Truth in the lady, ardour in the knight.
 "I built me castles wondrous rich and rare,
 "Few castle-builders could with me compare ;
 "The hall, the palace, rose at my command,
 "And these I fill'd with objects great and grand.
 "Virtues sublime, that nowhere else would live, 80
 "Glory and pomp, that I alone could give ;
 "Trophies and thrones, by matchless valour gain'd,
 "Faith unproved, and chastity unstain'd ;
 "With all that soothes the sense and charms the soul,
 "Came at my call, and were in my control.
 "And who was I? a slender youth and tall,
 "In manner awkward, and with fortune small ;
 "With visage pale ; my motions quick and slow,
 "That fall and rising in the spirits show ;
 "For none could more by outward signs express 90
 "What wise men lock within the mind's recess.
 "Had I a mirror set before my view,
 "I might have seen what such a form could do ;
 "Had I within the mirror truth beheld,
 "I should have such presuming thoughts repell'd :
 "But, awkward as I was, without the grace
 "That gives new beauty to a form or face,
 "Still I expected friends most true to prove,
 "And grateful, tender, warm, assiduous love.

THE ELDER BROTHER

“Assured of this, that love’s delicious bond
“Would hold me ever faithful, ever fond,
“It seem’d but just that I in love should find
“A kindred heart as constant and as kind.
“Give me, I cried, a beauty: none on earth
“Of higher rank or nobler in her birth;
“Pride of her race, her father’s hope and care,
“Yet meek as children of the cottage are;
“Nursed in the court, and there by love pursued,
“But fond of peace, and blest in solitude;
“By rivals honour’d, and by beauties praised,
“Yet all unconscious of the envy raised.
“Suppose her this, and from attendants freed,
“To want my prowess in a time of need,
“When safe and grateful she desires to show
“She feels the debt that she delights to owe,
“And loves the man who saved her in distress—
“So fancy will’d, nor would compound for less.
“This was my dream.—In some auspicious hour,
“In some sweet solitude, in some green bower,
“Whither my fate should lead me, there, unseen,
“I should behold my fancy’s gracious queen,
“Singing sweet song! that I should hear awhile,
“Then catch the transient glory of a smile;
“Then at her feet with trembling hope should kneel,
“Such as rapt saints and raptured lovers feel:
“To watch the chaste unfoldings of her heart,
“In joy to meet, in agony to part,
“And then in tender song to soothe my grief,
“And hail, in glorious rhyme, my *Lady of the Leaf*.
“To dream these dreams I chose a woody scene,
“My guardian-shade, the world and me between;
“A green inclosure, where beside its bound
“A thorny fence beset its beauties round,
“Save where some creature’s force had made a way
“For me to pass, and in my kingdom stray.
“Here then I stray’d, then sat me down to call,
“Just as I will’d, my shadowy subjects all!
“Fruits of all minds conceived on every coast—
“Fay, witch, enchanter, devil, demon, ghost;

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GEORGE CRABBE

"And thus with knights and nymphs, in halls and bowers, 140
 "In war and love, I pass'd unnumber'd hours.
 "Gross and substantial beings all forgot,
 "Ideal glories beam'd around the spot,
 "And all that was, with me, of this poor world was not. }
 "Yet in this world there was a single scene, []
 "That I allow'd with mine to intervene.
 "This house, where never yet my feet had stray'd,
 "I with respect and timid awe survey'd;
 "With pleasing wonder I have oft-times stood,
 "To view these turrets rising o'er the wood; 150
 "When fancy to the halls and chambers flew,
 "Large, solemn, silent, that I must not view;
 "The moat was then, and then o'er all the ground
 "Tall elms and ancient oaks stretch'd far around;
 "And where the soil forbade the nobler race,
 "Dwarf trees and humbler shrubs had found their place,
 "Forbidding man in their close hold to go,
 "Haw, gatter, holm, the service and the sloe;
 "With tangling weeds that at the bottom grew,
 "And climbers all above their feathery branches threw. 160
 "Nor path of man or beast was there espied;
 "But there the birds of darkness loved to hide,
 "The loathed toad to lodge, and speckled snake to glide. }
 "To me this hall, thus view'd in part, appear'd []
 "A mansion vast. I wonder'd, and I fear'd.
 "There as I wander'd, fancy's forming eye
 "Could gloomy cells and dungeons dark espy;
 "Winding through these, I caught th' appalling sound
 "Of troubled souls, that guilty minds confound, }
 "Where murder made its way, and mischief stalk'd around. []
 "Above the roof were raised the midnight storms, 171
 "And the wild lights betray'd the shadowy forms.
 "With all these flights and fancies, then so dear,
 "I reach'd the birth-day of my twentieth year;
 "And in the evening of a day in June
 "Was singing—as I sang—some heavenly tune.
 "My native tone, indeed, was harsh and hoarse,
 "But he who feels such powers can sing of course—
 "Is there a good on earth, or gift divine,

THE ELDER BROTHER

"That fancy cannot say, behold! 'tis mine? 180
 "So was I singing, when I saw descend
 "From this old seat a lady and her friend;
 "Downward they came with steady pace and slow,
 "Arm link'd in arm, to bless my world below.
 "I knew not yet if they escaped, or chose
 "Their own free way; if they had friends or foes—
 "But near to my dominion drew the pair,
 "Link'd arm in arm, and walk'd, conversing, there.
 "I saw them ere they came, myself unseen,
 "My lofty fence and thorny bound between— 190
 "And one alone, one matchless face I saw,
 "And, though at distance, felt delight and awe:
 "Fancy and truth adorn'd her; fancy gave
 "Much, but not all; truth help'd to make their slave.
 "For she was lovely, all was not the vain
 "Or sickly homage of a fever'd brain;
 "No! she had beauty, such as they admire
 "Whose hope is earthly, and whose love desire;
 "Imagination might her aid bestow,
 "But she had charms that only truth could show. 200
 "Their dress was such as well became the place,
 "But one superior; hers the air, the grace,
 "The condescending looks, that spoke the nobler race. []
 "Slender she was and tall: her fairy-feet
 "Bore her right onward to my shady seat;
 "And O! I sigh'd that she would nobly dare
 "To come, nor let her friend th' adventure share;
 "But see how I in my dominion reign,
 "And never wish to view the world again.
 "Thus was I musing, seeing with my eyes 210
 "These objects, with my mind her fantasies,
 "And chiefly thinking—is this maid, divine
 "As she appears, to be this queen of mine?
 "Have I from henceforth beauty in my view,
 "Not airy all, but tangible and true?
 "Here then I fix, here bound my vagrant views,
 "And here devote my heart, my time, my muse.
 "She saw not this, though ladies early trace
 "Their beauty's power, the glories of their face;

"Yet knew not this fair creature—could not know
 "That new-born love that I too soon must show ! 220
 "And I was musing—how shall I begin ?
 "How make approach my unknown way to win,
 "And to that heart, as yet untouch'd, make known
 "The wound, the wish, the weakness of my own ?
 "Such is my part, but—Mercy ! what alarm ?
 "Dare aught on earth that sovereign beauty harm ?
 "Again—the shrieking charmers—how they rend
 "The gentle air—The shriekers lack a friend—
 "They are my princess and th' attendant maid, 230
 "In so much danger, and so much afraid !—
 "But whence the terror ?—Let me haste and see
 "What has befallen them who cannot flee—
 "Whence can the peril rise ? What can that peril be ? []
 "It soon appear'd, that while this nymph divine
 "Moved on, there met her rude uncivil kine,
 "Who knew her not—the damsel was not there
 "Who kept them—all obedient—in her care ;
 "Strangers they thus defied and held in scorn,
 "And stood in threat'ning posture, hoof and horn ; 240
 "While Susan—pail in hand—could stand the while
 "And prate with Daniel at a distant stile.
 "As feeling prompted, to the place I ran,
 "Resolved to save the maids and show the man.
 "Was each a cow like that which challenged Guy,
 "I had resolved t' attack it, and defy
 "In mortal combat ! to repel or die ! []
 "That was no time to parley—or to say,
 "I will protect you—fly in peace away !
 "Lo ! yonder stile—but with an air of grace, 250
 "As I supposed, I pointed to the place.
 "The fair ones took me at my sign, and flew,
 "Each like a dove, and to the stile withdrew ;
 "Where safe, at distance, and from terrors free,
 "They turn'd to view my beastly foes and me.
 "I now had time my business to behold,
 "And did not like it—let the truth be told :
 "The cows, though cowards, yet in numbers strong,
 "Like other mobs, by might defended wrong ;

THE ELDER BROTHER

"In man's own pathway fix'd, they seem'd disposed 260
 "For hostile measure, and in order closed,
 "Then halted near me, as I judged, to treat,
 "Before we came to triumph or defeat.
 "I was in doubt: 'twas sore disgrace, I knew,
 "To turn my back, and let the cows pursue;
 "And should I rashly mortal strife begin,
 "'Twas all unknown who might the battle win;
 "And yet to wait, and neither fight nor fly,
 "Would mirth create—I could not that deny;
 "It look'd as if for safety I would treat, 270
 "Nay, sue for peace—No! rather come defeat!
 "'Look to me, loveliest of thy sex! and give
 "'One cheering glance, and not a cow shall live;
 "'For lo! this iron bar, this strenuous arm,
 "'And those dear eyes to aid me as a charm.'
 "Say, goddess! Victory! say, on man or cow
 "Meanest thou now to perch?—On neither now—
 "For, as I ponder'd, on their way appear'd
 "The Amazonian milker of the herd;
 "These, at the wonted signals, made a stand, 280
 "And woo'd the nymph of the relieving hand;
 "Nor heeded now the man, who felt relief
 "Of other kind, and not unmix'd with grief;
 "For now he neither should his courage prove,
 "Nor in his dying moments boast his love.
 "My sovereign beauty with amazement saw—
 "So she declared—the horrid things in awe;
 "Well pleased, she witness'd what respect was paid
 "By such brute natures—Every cow afraid,
 "And kept at distance by the powers of one, 290
 "Who had to her a dangerous service done,
 "That prudence had declined, that valour's self might shun. []
 "So thought the maid, who now, beyond the stile,
 "Received her champion with a gracious smile;
 "Who now had leisure on those charms to dwell,
 "That he could never from his thought expel.
 "There are, I know, to whom a lover seems,
 "Praising his mistress, to relate his dreams;
 "But, Richard, looks like those, that angel-face

GEORGE CRABBE

"Could I no more in sister-angel trace ;
 "O ! it was more than fancy ! it was more
 "Than in my darling views I saw before,
 "When I my idol made, and my allegiance swore.
 "Henceforth 'twas bliss upon that face to dwell,
 "Till every trace became indelible ;
 "I bless'd the cause of that alarm, her fright,
 "And all that gave me favour in her sight,
 "Who then was kind and grateful, till my mind,
 "Pleased and exulting, awe awhile resign'd.
 "For in the moment when she feels afraid,
 "How kindly speaks the condescending maid ;
 "She sees her danger near, she wants her lover's aid.
 "As fire electric, when discharged, will strike
 "All who receive it, and they feel alike,
 "So in the shock of danger and surprise
 "Our minds are struck, and mix, and sympathise.
 "But danger dies, and distance comes between
 "My state and that of my all glorious queen ;
 "Yet much was done—upon my mind a chain
 "Was strongly fix'd, and likely to remain ;
 "Listening, I grew enamour'd of the sound,
 "And felt to her my very being bound ;
 "I bless'd the scene, nor felt a power to move,
 "Lost in the ecstasies of infant-love.
 "She saw and smiled ; the smile delight convey'd,
 "My love encouraged, and my act repaid.
 "In that same smile I read the charmer meant
 "To give her hero chaste encouragement ;
 "It spoke, as plainly as a smile can speak,
 "Seek whom you love, love freely whom you seek.'
 "Thus, when the lovely witch had wrought her charm,
 "She took th' attendant maiden by the arm,
 "And left me fondly gazing, till no more
 "I could the shade of that dear form explore ;
 "Then to my secret haunt I turn'd again,
 "Fire in my heart, and fever in my brain ;
 "That face of her for ever in my view,
 "Whom I was henceforth fated to pursue,
 "To hope I knew not what—small hope in what I knew.

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THE ELDER BROTHER

“O! my dear Richard, what a waste of time
“Gave I not thus to lunacy sublime;
“What days, months, years, (to useful purpose lost)
“Has not this dire infatuation cost?
“To this fair vision I, a [bonded] slave,
“Time, duty, credit, honour, comfort, gave;
“Gave all—and waited for the glorious things
“That hope expects, but fortune never brings.
“Yet let me own, while I my fault reprove,
“There is one blessing still affix’d to love—
“To love like mine—for, as my soul it drew
“From reason’s path, it shunn’d dishonour’s too;
“It made my taste refined, my feelings nice,
“And placed an angel in the way of vice.
“This angel now, whom I no longer view’d,
“Far from this scene her destined way pursued;
“No more that mansion held a form so fair,
“She was away, and beauty was not there.
“Such, my dear Richard, was my early flame,
“My youthful frenzy—give it either name;
“It was the withering bane of many a year,
“That past away in causeless hope and fear—
“The hopes, the fears, that every dream could kill,
“Or make alive, and lead my passive will.
“At length I learnt one name my angel bore,
“And Rosabella I must now adore:
“Yet knew but this—and not the favour’d place
“That held the angel or th’ angelic race;
“Nor where, admired, the sweet enchantress dwelt,
“But I had lost her—that, indeed, I felt.
“Yet, would I say, she will at length be mine!
“Did ever hero hope or love resign?
“Though men oppose, and fortune bids despair,
“She will in time her mischief well repair,
“And I, at last, shall wed this fairest of the fair!
“My thrifty uncle, now return’d, began
“To stir within me what remain’d of man;
“My powerful frenzy painted to the life,
“And ask’d me if I took a dream to wife?
“Debate ensued, and, though not well content,

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"Upon a visit to his house I went.
 "He, the most saving of mankind, had still
 "Some kindred feeling; he would guide my will,
 "And teach me wisdom—so affection wrought,
 "That he to save me from destruction sought:
 "To him destruction, the most awful curse
 "Of misery's children, was—an empty purse!
 "He his own books approved, and thought the pen
 "An useful instrument for trading men;
 "But judged a quill was never to be slit
 "Except to make it for a merchant fit. 390
 "He, when inform'd how men of taste could write,
 "Look'd on his ledger with supreme delight;
 "Then would he laugh, and, with insulting joy,
 "Tell me aloud, 'that's poetry, my boy;
 "'These are your golden numbers—them repeat,
 "'The more you have, the more you'll find them sweet—
 "'Their numbers move all hearts—no matter for their
 feet. }
 "Sir, when a man composes in this style,
 "'What is to him a critic's frown or smile?
 "'What is the puppy's censure or applause 400
 "'To the good man who on his banker draws,
 "'Buys an estate, and writes upon the grounds,
 "'Pay to A. B. an hundred thousand pounds?'
 "'Thus, my dear nephew, thus your talents prove;
 "'Leave verse to poets, and the poor to love.'
 "Some months I suffered thus, compell'd to sit
 "And hear a wealthy kinsman aim at wit;
 "Yet there was something in his nature good,
 "And he had feeling for the tie of blood.
 "So, while I languish'd for my absent maid 410
 "I some observance to my uncle paid."
 "Had you inquired?" said Richard.
 "I had placed
 "Inquirers round, but nothing could be traced;
 "Of every reasoning creature at this Hall,
 "And tenant near it, I applied to all—
 "'Tell me if she'—and I described her well—
 "'Dwelt long a guest, or where retired to dwell?'

THE ELDER BROTHER

"But no! such lady they remember'd not—
"They saw that face, strange beings! and forgot.
"Nor was inquiry all; but I pursued 420
"My soul's first wish, with hope's vast strength endued:
"I cross'd the seas, I went where strangers go,
"And gazed on crowds as one who dreads a foe,
"Or seeks a friend; and, when I sought in vain,
"Fled to fresh crowds, and hoped, and gazed again."
"It was a strong possession"—"Strong and strange,
"I felt the evil, yet desired not change.
"Years now had flown, nor was the passion cured,
"But hope had life, and so was life endured;
"The mind's disease, with all its strength, stole on, 430
"Till youth, and health, and all but love were gone.
"And there were seasons, Richard, horrid hours
"Of mental suffering! they o'erthrew my powers,
"And made my mind unsteady—I have still,
"At times, a feeling of that nameless ill,
"That is not madness—I could always tell
"My mind was wandering—knew it was not well;
"Felt all my loss of time, the shameful waste
"Of talents perish'd, and of parts disgraced.
"But though my mind was sane, there was a void— 440
"My understanding seem'd in part destroy'd;
"I thought I was not of my species one,
"But unconnected, injured and undone!
"While in this state, once more my uncle pray'd
"That I would hear—I heard, and I obey'd;
"For I was thankful that a being broke
"On this my sadness, or an interest took
"In my poor life—but, at his mansion, rest
"Came with its halcyon stillness to my breast.
"Slowly there enter'd in my mind concern 450
"For things about me—I would something learn,
"And to my uncle listen; who, with joy,
"Found that ev'n yet I could my powers employ,
"Till I could feel new hopes my mind possess,
"Of ease at least, if not of happiness;
"Till, not contented, not in discontent,
"As my good uncle counsell'd, on I went;

"Conscious of youth's great error—nay, the crime
 "Of manhood now—a dreary waste of time!
 "Conscious of that account which I must give 460
 "How life had past with me—I strove to live.
 "Had I, like others, my first hope attain'd,
 "I must, at least, a certainty have gain'd;
 "Had I, like others, lost the hope of youth,
 "Another hope had promised greater truth;
 "But I in baseless hopes, and groundless views,
 "Was fated time, and peace, and health to lose,
 "Impell'd to seek, for ever doom'd to fail,
 "Is—I distress you—let me end my tale.
 "Something one day occur'd about a bill 470
 "That was not drawn with true mercantile skill,
 "And I was ask'd and authorized to go
 "To seek the firm of Clutterbuck and Co.;
 "Their hour was past—but when I urged the case,
 "There was a youth who named a second place;
 "Where, on occasions of important kind,
 "I might the man of occupation find
 "In his retirement, where he found repose
 "From the vexations that in business rose.
 "I found, though not with ease, this private seat 480
 "Of soothing quiet, wisdom's still retreat.
 "The house was good, but not so pure and clean
 "As I had houses of retirement seen;
 "Yet men, I knew, of meditation deep,
 "Love not their maidens should their studies sweep;
 "His room I saw, and must acknowledge, there
 "Were not the signs of cleanliness or care:
 "A female servant, void of female grace,
 "Loose in attire, proceeded to the place;
 "She stared intrusive on my slender frame, 490
 "And boldly ask'd my business and my name.
 "I gave them both; and, left to be amused,
 "Well as I might, the parlour I perused.
 "The shutters half unclosed, the curtains fell
 "Half down, and rested on the window-sill,
 "And thus, confusedly, made the room half visible.
 "Late as it was, the little parlour bore

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THE ELDER BROTHER

"Some tell-tale tokens of the night before ;
 "There were strange sights and scents about the room,
 "Of food high-season'd, and of strong perfume ; 500
 "Two unmatch'd sofas ample rents display'd ;
 "Carpet and curtains were alike decay'd ;
 "A large old mirror, with once-gilded frame,
 "Reflected prints that I forbear to name,
 "Such as a youth might purchase—but, in truth,
 "Not a sedate or sober-minded youth ;
 "The cinders yet were sleeping in the grate,
 "Warm from the fire, continued large and late,
 "As left by careless folk in their neglected state ; }
 "The chairs in haste seem'd whirl'd about the room, 510 }
 "As when the sons of riot hurry home, }
 "And leave the troubled place to solitude and gloom. }
 "All this, for I had ample time, I saw,
 "And prudence question'd—should we not withdraw ?
 "For he who makes me thus on business wait,
 "Is not for business in a proper state ;
 "But man there was not, was not he for whom
 "To this convenient lodging I was come ;
 "No ! but a lady's voice was heard to call
 "On my attention—and she had it all ; 520
 "For lo ! she enters, speaking ere in sight,
 "'Monsieur ! I shall not want the chair to-night—
 "'Where shall I see him?—This dear hour atones
 "'For all affection's hopeless sighs and groans'—
 "Then, turning to me—'Art thou come at last ?
 "'A thousand welcomes—be forgot the past ;
 "'Forgotten all the grief that absence brings,
 "'Fear that torments, and jealousy that stings—
 "'All that is cold, injurious, and unkind,
 "'Be it for ever banish'd from the mind ; 530
 "'And in that mind, and in that heart be now
 "'The soft endearment, and the binding vow !'
 "She spoke—and o'er the practised features threw
 "The looks that reason charm, and strength subdue.
 "Will you not ask, how I beheld that face,
 "Or read that mind, and read it in that place ?
 "I have tried, Richard, oft-times, and in vain,

GEORGE CRABBE

"To trace my thoughts, and to review their train—
 "If train there were—that meadow, grove, and stile ;
 "The fright, th' escape, her sweetness and her smile ; 540
 "Years since elapsed, and hope, from year to year,
 "To find her free—and then to find her here !

"But is it she?—O ! yes ; the rose is dead ;
 "All beauty, fragrance, freshness, glory fled ;
 "But yet 'tis she—the same and not the same—
 "Who to my bower an heavenly being came ;
 "Who waked my soul's first thought of real bliss ;
 "Whom long I sought ; and now I find her—this.

"I cannot paint her—something I had seen 550
 "So pale and slim, and tawdry and unclean ;
 "With haggard looks, of vice and wo the prey,
 "Laughing in langour, miserably gay.

"Her face, where face appear'd, was amply spread,
 "By art's coarse pencil, with ill-chosen red, }
 "The flower's fictitious bloom, the blushing of the dead ; }
 "But still the features were the same, and strange
 "My view of both—the sameness and the change,
 "That fix'd me gazing and my eye enchain'd,
 "Although so little of herself remain'd ;

"It is the creature whom I loved, and yet 560
 "Is far unlike her—Would I could forget
 "The angel or her fall ! the once adored
 "Or now despised ! the worshipp'd or deplored !

"'O ! Rosabella !' I prepared to say,
 "'Whom I have loved,' but prudence whisper'd nay,
 "And folly grew ashamed—discretion had her day. }
 "She gave her hand ; which, as I lightly press'd,
 "The cold but ardent grasp my soul oppress'd ;
 "The ruin'd girl disturb'd me, and my eyes
 "Look'd, I conceive, both sorrow and surprise. 570

"I spoke my business—'He,' she answer'd, 'comes
 "'And lodges here—he has the backward rooms—
 "'He now is absent, and I chanced to hear
 "'Will not before to-morrow eve appear,
 "'And may be longer absent—O ! the night
 "'When you preserved me in that horrid fright ;
 "'A thousand, thousand times, asleep, awake,

THE ELDER BROTHER

“I thought of what you ventured for my sake—
“Now, have you thought—yet tell me so—deceive
“Your Rosabella, willing to believe! 580
“O! there is something in love's first-born pain
“Sweeter than bliss—it never comes again—
“But has your heart been faithful?’—Here my pride,
“To anger rising, her attempt defied—
“My faith must childish in your sight appear,
“Who have been faithful—to how many, dear?’
“If words had fail'd, a look explain'd their style,
“She could not blush assent, but she could smile.
“Good heaven! I thought, have I rejected fame,
“Credit, and wealth, for one who smiles at shame? 590
“She saw me thoughtful—saw it, as I guess'd,
“With some concern, though nothing she express'd.
“Come, my dear friend, discard that look of care,
“All things were made to be, as all things are;
“All to seek pleasure as the end design'd,
“The only good in matter or in mind;
“So was I taught by one, who gave me all
“That my experienced heart can wisdom call.
“I saw thee young, love's soft obedient slave,
“And many a sigh to my young lover gave; 600
“And I had, spite of cowardice or cow,
“Return'd thy passion, and exchanged my vow;
“But, while I thought to bait the amorous hook,
“One set for me my eager fancy took;
“There was a crafty eye, that far could see,
“And through my failings fascinated me:
“Mine was a childish wish, to please my boy;
“His a design, his wishes to enjoy.
“O! we have both about the world been tost,
“Thy gain I know not—I, they cry, am lost; 610
“So let the wise ones talk; they talk in vain,
“And are mistaken both in loss and gain;
“'Tis gain to get whatever life affords,
“'Tis loss to spend our time in empty words.
“I was a girl, and thou a boy wert then,
“Nor aught of women knew, nor I of men;
“But I have traffick'd in the world, and thou,

GEORGE CRABBE

“Doubtless, canst boast of thy experience now ;
“Let us the knowledge we have gain'd produce,
“And kindly turn it to our common use.”
“Thus spoke the siren in voluptuous style,
“While I stood gazing and perplex'd the while,
“Chain'd by that voice, confounded by that smile.
“And then she sang, and changed from grave to gay,
“Till all reproach and anger died away.

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“My Damon was the first to wake
“The gentle flame that cannot die ;
“My Damon is the last to take
“The faithful bosom's softest sigh :
“The life between is nothing worth,
“O ! cast it from thy thought away ;
“Think of the day that gave it birth,
“And this its sweet returning day.

630

“Buried be all that has been done,
“Or say that naught is done amiss ;
“For who the dangerous path can shun
“In such bewildering world as this ?
“But love can every fault forgive,
“Or with a tender look reprove ;
“And now let naught in memory live,
“But that we meet, and that we love.”

640

“And then she moved my pity ; for she wept,
“And told her miseries till resentment slept ;
“For when she saw she could not reason blind,
“She pour'd her heart's whole sorrows on my mind,
“With features graven on my soul, with sighs
“Seen but not heard, with soft imploring eyes,
“And voice that needed not, but had the aid
“Of powerful words to soften and persuade.

THE ELDER BROTHER

"O! I repent me of the past; and sure 650
 "Grief and repentance make the bosom pure;
 "Yet meet thee not with clean and single heart,
 "As on the day we met—and but to part!
 "Ere I had drank the cup that to my lip
 "Was held, and press'd till I was forced to sip.
 "I drank indeed, but never ceased to hate—
 "It poison'd, but could not intoxicate.
 "'T'excuse my fall I plead not love's excess,
 "But a weak orphan's need and loneliness.
 "I had no parent upon earth—no door 660
 "Was oped to me—young, innocent, and poor,
 "Vain, tender, and resentful—and my friend,
 "Jealous of one who must on her depend,
 "Making life misery—You could witness then
 "That I was precious in the eyes of men;
 "So, made by them a goddess, and denied
 "Respect and notice by the women's pride;
 "Here scorn'd, there worshipp'd—will it strange appear,
 "Allured and driven, that I settled here?
 "Yet loved it not; and never have I pass'd 670
 "One day, and wish'd another like the last.
 "There was a fallen angel, I have read,
 "For whom their tears the sister-angels shed,
 "Because, although she ventured to rebel,
 "She was not minded like a child of hell.—
 "Such is my lot! and will it not be given
 "To grief like mine, that I may think of heaven;
 "Behold how there the glorious creatures shine,
 "And all my soul to grief and hope resign?"
 "I wonder'd, doubting—and, is this a fact, 680
 "I thought, or part thou art disposed to act?
 "'Is it not written, He, who came to save
 "Sinners, the sins of deepest dye forgave;
 "That he his mercy to the sufferers dealt,
 "And pardon'd error when the ill was felt?
 "Yes! I would hope, there is an eye that reads
 "What is within, and sees the heart that bleeds—
 "But who on earth will one so lost deplore,
 "And who will help that lost one to restore?

GEORGE CRABBE

"Who will on trust the sigh of grief receive ;
 "And—all things warring with belief—believe ?"
 "Soften'd, I said—'Be mine the hand and heart,
 "If with your world you will consent to part.'
 "She would—she tried—Alas! she did not know
 "How deeply rooted evil habits grow :
 "She felt the truth upon her spirits press,
 "But wanted ease, indulgence, show, excess,
 "Voluptuous banquets, pleasures—not refined,
 "But such as soothe to sleep th' opposing mind—
 "She look'd for idle vice, the time to kill,
 "And subtle, strong apologies for ill ;
 "And thus her yielding, unresisting soul
 "Sank, and let sin confuse her and control :
 "Pleasures that brought disgust yet brought relief,
 "And minds she hated help'd to war with grief."
 "Thus then she perish'd ?"—
 "Nay—but thus she proved
 "Slave to the vices that she never loved ;
 "But, while she thus her better thoughts opposed,
 "And woo'd the world, the world's deceptions closed.—
 "I had long lost her ; but I sought in vain
 "To banish pity—still she gave me pain ;
 "Still I desired to aid her—to direct,
 "And wish'd the world, that won her, to reject ;
 "Nor wish'd in vain—there came, at length, request
 "That I would see a wretch with grief oppress'd,
 "By guilt affrighted—and I went to trace
 "Once more the vice-worn features of that face,
 "That sin-wreck'd being ! and I saw her laid
 "Where never worldly joy a visit paid,
 "That world receding fast ! the world to come
 "Conceal'd in terror, ignorance, and gloom,
 "Sins, sorrow, and neglect : with not a spark
 "Of vital hope—all horrible and dark—
 "It frighten'd me !—I thought, and shall not I
 "Thus feel ? thus fear ?—this danger can I fly ?
 "Do I so wisely live that I can calmly die ?
 "The wants I saw I could supply with ease,
 "But there were wants of other kind than these ;

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THE ELDER BROTHER

"Th' awakening thought, the hope-inspiring view—
 "The doctrines awful, grand, alarming, true—
 "Most painful to the soul, and yet most healing too. 730 } []
 "Still, I could something offer, and could send
 "For other aid—a more important friend,
 "Whose duty call'd him, and his love no less,
 "To help the grieving spirit in distress ;
 "To save in that sad hour the drooping prey,
 "And from its victim drive despair away.
 "All decent comfort[s] round the sick were seen ;
 "The female helpers quiet, sober, clean ;
 "Her kind physician with a smile appear'd, 740
 "And zealous love the pious friend endear'd ;
 "While I, with mix'd sensations, could inquire,
 "'Hast thou one wish, one unfulfill'd desire ?
 "'Speak every thought, nor unindulged depart,
 "'If I can make thee happier than thou art.'
 "Yes! there was yet a female friend, an old
 "And grieving nurse! to whom it should be told—
 "If I would tell—that she, her child, had fail'd,
 "And turn'd from truth! yet truth at length prevail'd.
 "'Twas in that chamber, Richard, I began 750
 "To think more deeply of the end of man :
 "Was it to jostle all his fellows by,
 "To run before them, and say, 'here am I,
 "'Fall down, and worship?'—Was it, life throughout,
 "With circumspection keen to hunt about,
 "As spaniels for their game, where might be found
 "Abundance more for coffers that abound ?
 "Or was it life's enjoyments to prefer,
 "Like this poor girl, and then to die like her ?
 "No! He, who gave the faculties, design'd 760
 "Another use for the immortal mind :
 "There is a state in which it will appear
 "With all the good and ill contracted here ;
 "With gain and loss, improvement and defect ;
 "And then, my soul! what hast thou to expect
 "For talents laid aside, life's waste, and time's neglect? } []
 "Still as I went came other change—the frame
 "And features wasted, and yet slowly came

GEORGE CRABBE

"The end; and so inaudible the breath,
 "And still the breathing, we exclaim'd—'tis death!" 770
 "But death it was not: when, indeed, she died,
 "I sat and his last gentle stroke espied:
 "When—as it came—or did my fancy trace
 "That lively, lovely flushing o'er the face,
 "Bringing back all that my young heart impress'd?
 "It came—and went!—She sigh'd, and was at rest!
 "Adieu, I said, fair Frailty! dearly cost
 "The love I bore thee—time and treasure lost;
 "And I have suffer'd many years in vain;
 "Now let me something in my sorrows gain: 780
 "Heaven would not all this wo for man intend
 "If man's existence with his wo should end;
 "Heaven would not pain, and grief, and anguish give,
 "If man was not by discipline to live;
 "And for that brighter, better world prepare,
 "That souls with souls, when purified, shall share,
 "Those stains all done away that must not enter there. []
 "Home I return'd, with spirits in that state
 "Of vacant wo I strive not to relate;
 "Nor how, deprived of all her hope and strength, 790
 "My soul turn'd feebly to the world at length.
 "I travell'd then till health again resumed
 "Its former seat—I must not say re-bloom'd;
 "And then I fill'd, not loth, that favourite place
 "That has enrich'd some seniors of our race;
 "Patient and dull I grew; my uncle's praise
 "Was largely dealt me on my better days;
 "A love of money—other love at rest—
 "Came creeping on, and settled in my breast;
 "The force of habit held me to the oar, 800
 "Till I could relish what I scorn'd before:
 "I now could talk and scheme with *men of sense*,
 "Who deal for millions, and who sigh for pence;
 "And grew so like them, that I heard with joy
 "Old Blueskin said I was a pretty boy;
 "For I possess'd the caution, with the zeal,
 "That all true lovers of their interest feel.
 "Exalted praise! and to the creature due

THE ELDER BROTHER

"Who loves that interest solely to pursue.

"But I was sick, and sickness brought disgust ;

810

"My peace I could not to my profits trust :

"Again some views of brighter kind appear'd,

"My heart was humbled, and my mind was clear'd ;

"I felt those helps that souls diseased restore,

"And that cold frenzy, avarice, raged no more.

"From dreams of boundless wealth I then arose ;

"This place, the scene of infant bliss, I chose ;

"And here I find relief, and here I seek repose.

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"Yet much is lost, and not yet much is found,

"But what remains, I would believe, is sound :

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"That first wild passion, that last mean desire,

"Are felt no more ; but holier hopes require

"A mind prepared and steady—my reform

"Has fears like his, who, suffering in a storm,

"Is on a rich but unknown country cast,

"The future fearing, while he feels the past ;

"But whose more cheerful mind, with hope imbued,

"Sees through receding clouds the rising good."

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK VIII.

THE SISTERS.

Morning Walk and Conversation—Visit at a Cottage—Characters of the Sisters—Lucy and Jane—Their Lovers—Their Friend the Banker and his Lady—Their Intimacy—Its Consequence—Different Conduct of the Lovers—The Effect upon the Sisters—Their present State—The Influence of their Fortune upon the Minds of either.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK VIII.

THE SISTERS.

THE morning shone in cloudless beauty bright ;
Richard his letters read with much delight ;
George from his pillow rose in happy tone,
His bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne.
They read the morning news—they saw the sky
Inviting call'd them, and the earth was dry.

"The day invites us, brother," said the 'squire ;
"Come, and I'll show thee something to admire :

"We still may beauty in our prospects trace ;

"If not, we have them in both mind and face.

10

"'Tis but two miles—to let such women live
"Unseen of him, what reason can I give ?

"Why should not Richard to the girls be known ?

"Would I have all their friendship for my own ?—

"Brother, there dwell, yon northern hill below,

"Two favourite maidens, whom 'tis good to know ;

"Young, but experienced ; dwellers in a cot,

"Where they sustain and dignify their lot ;

"The best good girls in all our world below—

"O ! you must know them—Come ! and you shall know. 20

"But lo ! the morning wastes—here, Jacob, stir—

"If Phœbe comes, do you attend to her ;

GEORGE CRABBE

"And let not Mary get a chattering press
 "Of idle girls to hear of her distress.
 "Ask her to wait till my return—and hide
 "From her meek mind your plenty and your pride ;
 "Nor vex a creature, humble, sad, and still,
 "By your coarse bounty, and your rude good-will."

This said, the brothers hasten'd on their way,
 With all the foretaste of a pleasant day.
 The morning purpose in the mind had fix'd
 The leading thought, and that with others mix'd.

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"How well it is," said George, "when we possess
 "The strength that bears us up in our distress ;
 "And need not the resources of our pride,
 "Our fall from greatness and our wants to hide ;
 "But have the spirit and the wish to show,
 "We know our wants as well as others know.
 "'Tis true, the rapid turns of fortune's wheel
 "Make even the virtuous and the humble feel :
 "They for a time must suffer, and but few
 "Can bear their sorrows and our pity too.

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"Hence all these small expedients, day by day,
 "Are used to hide the evils they betray :
 "When, if our pity chances to be seen,
 "The wounded pride retorts, with anger keen,
 "And man's insulted grief takes refuge in his spleen.

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"When Timon's board contains a single dish,
 "Timon talks much of market-men and fish,
 "Forgetful servants, and th' infernal cook,
 "Who always spoil'd whate'er she undertook.

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"But say it tries us from our height to fall,
 "Yet is not life itself a trial all ?
 "And not a virtue in the bosom lives,
 "That gives such ready pay as patience gives ;
 "That pure submission to the ruling mind,
 "Fix'd, but not forced ; obedient, but not blind ;
 "The will of heaven to make her own she tries,
 "Or makes her own to heaven a sacrifice.

"And is there aught on earth so rich or rare,
 "Whose pleasures may with virtue's pains compare ?
 "This fruit of patience, this the pure delight

60

THE SISTERS

"That 'tis a trial in her Judge's sight ;
"Her part still striving duty to sustain,
"Not spurning pleasure, not defying pain ;
"Never in triumph till her race be won,
"And never fainting till her work be done."

With thoughts like these they reach'd the village brook,
And saw a lady sitting with her book ;
And so engaged she heard not, till the men 70
Were at her side, nor was she frighten'd then ;
But to her friend, the 'squire, his smile return'd,
Through which the latent sadness he discern'd.
The stranger-brother at the cottage door
Was now admitted, and was strange no more ;
Then of an absent sister he was told,
Whom they were not at present to behold ;
Something was said of nerves, and that disease,
Whose varying powers on mind and body seize,
Enfeebling both !—Here chose they to remain 80
One hour in peace, and then return'd again.

"I know not why," said Richard, "but I feel
"The warmest pity on my bosom steal
"For that dear maid ! How well her looks express
"For this world's good a cherish'd hopelessness !
"A resignation that is so entire,
"It feels not now the stirrings of desire ;
"What now to her is all the world esteems ?
"She is awake, and cares not for its dreams ;
"But moves while yet on earth, as one above 90
"Its hopes and fears—it[s] loathing and its love.
"But shall I learn," said he, "these sisters' fate ?"—
And found his brother willing to relate.

"The girls were orphans early ; yet I saw,
"When young, their father—his profession law ;
"He left them but a competence, a store
"That made his daughters neither rich nor poor ;
"Not rich, compared with some who dwelt around ;

GEORGE CRABBE

"Not poor, for want they neither fear'd nor found;
 "Their guardian uncle was both kind and just, 100
 "One whom a parent might in dying trust;
 "Who, in their youth, the trusted store improved,
 "And, when he ceased to guide them, fondly loved.

"These sister beauties were in fact the grace
 "Of yon small town,—it was their native place;
 "Like Saul's famed daughters were the lovely twain,
 "As Micah, Lucy, and as Merab, Jane:
 "For this was tall, with free commanding air,
 "And that was mild, and delicate, and fair.

"Jane had an arch delusive smile, that charm'd 110
 "And threaten'd too; alluring, it alarm'd;
 "The smile of Lucy her approval told,
 "Cheerful, not changing; neither kind nor cold.

"When children, Lucy love alone possess'd,
 "Jane was more punish'd and was more caress'd;
 "If told the childish wishes, one bespoke
 "A lamb, a bird, a garden, and a brook;
 "The other wish'd a joy unknown, a rout
 "Or crowded ball, and to be first led out.

"Lucy loved all that grew upon the ground, 120
 "And loveliness in all things living found;
 "The gilded fly, the fern upon the wall,
 "Were nature's works, and admirable all;
 "Pleased with indulgence of so cheap a kind,
 "Its cheapness never discomposed her mind.

"Jane had no liking for such things as these,
 "Things pleasing her must her superiors please;
 "The costly flower was precious in her eyes,
 "That skill can vary, or that money buys;
 "Her taste was good, but she was still afraid, 130
 "Till fashion sanction'd the remarks she made.

"The sisters read, and Jane with some delight,
 "The satires keen that fear or rage excite,
 "That men in power attack, and ladies high,
 "And give broad hints that we may know them by.
 "She was amused when sent to haunted rooms,
 "Or some dark passage where the spirit comes
 "Of one once murder'd! then she laughing read,

THE SISTERS

"And felt at once the folly and the dread.
 "As rustic girls to crafty gipsies fly, 140
 "And trust the liar though they fear the lie,
 "Or as a patient, urged by grievous pains,
 "Will see the daring quack whom he disdains :
 "So Jane was pleased to see the beckoning hand,
 "And trust the magic of the Ratcliffe-wand.

"In her religion—for her mind, though light,
 "Was not disposed our better views to slight—
 "Her favourite authors were a solemn kind,
 "Who fill with dark mysterious thoughts the mind ;
 "And who with such conceits her fancy plied, 150
 "Became her friend, philosopher, and guide.

"She made the Progress of the Pilgrim one
 "To build a thousand pleasant views upon ;
 "All that connects us with a world above
 "She loved to fancy, and she long'd to prove ;
 "Well would the poet please her, who could lead
 "Her fancy forth, yet keep untouch'd her creed.

"Led by an early custom, Lucy spied,
 "When she awaked, the Bible at her side ;
 "That, ere she ventured on a world of care, 160
 "She might for trials, joys or pains prepare,
 "For every dart a shield, a guard for every snare. []

"She read not much of high heroic deeds,
 "Where man the measure of man's power exceeds ;
 "But gave to luckless love and fate severe
 "Her tenderest pity and her softest tear.

"She mix'd not faith with fable, but she trod
 "Right onward, cautious in the ways of God ;
 "Nor did she dare to launch on seas unknown,
 "In search of truths by some adventurers shown, 170
 "But her own compass used, and kept a course her own. []

"The maidens both their loyalty declared,
 "And in the glory of their country shared ;
 "But Jane that glory felt with proud delight,
 "When England's foes were vanquish'd in the fight ;
 "While Lucy's feelings for the brave who bled
 "Put all such glorious triumphs from her head.

"They both were frugal ; Lucy from the fear

GEORGE CRABBE

"Of wasting that which want esteems so dear,
"But finds so scarce, her sister from the pain 180
"That springs from want, when treated with disdain.

"Jane borrow'd maxims from a doubting school,
"And took for truth the test of ridicule;
"Lucy saw no such virtue in a jest:
"Truth was with her of ridicule a test.

"They loved each other with the warmth of youth,
"With ardour, candour, tenderness, and truth;
"And, though their pleasures were not just the same,
"Yet both were pleased whenever one became;
"Nay, each would rather in the act rejoice, 190
"That was th' adopted, not the native choice.

"Each had a friend, and friends to minds so fond
"And good are soon united in the bond;
"Each had a lover; but it seem'd that fate
"Decreed that these should not approximate.
"Now Lucy's lover was a prudent swain,
"And thought, in all things, what would be his gain;
"The younger sister first engaged his view,
"But with her beauty he her spirit knew;
"Her face he much admired, 'but, put the case,' 200
"Said he, 'I marry, what is then a face?'
"At first it pleases to have drawn the lot;
"He then forgets it, but his wife does not;
"Jane too,' he judged, 'would be reserved and nice,
"And many lovers had enhanced her price.'

"Thus thinking much, but hiding what he thought,
"The prudent lover Lucy's favour sought,
"And he succeeded—she was free from art,
"And his appear'd a gentle guileless heart;
"Such she respected; true, her sister found 210
"His placid face too ruddy and too round,
"Too cold and inexpressive; such a face
"Where you could nothing mark'd or manly trace.

"But Lucy found him to his mother kind,
"And saw the Christian meekness of his mind;
"His voice was soft, his temper mild and sweet,
"His mind was easy, and his person neat.

"Jane said he wanted courage; Lucy drew

THE SISTERS

"No ill from that, though she believed it too ;
 " 'It is religious, Jane, be not severe ;' 220
 " 'Well, Lucy, then it is religious fear.'
 "Nor could the sister, great as was her love,
 "A man so lifeless and so cool approve.
 "Jane had a lover, whom a lady's pride
 "Might wish to see attending at her side,
 "Young, handsome, sprightly, and with good address,
 "Not mark'd for folly, error or excess ;
 "Yet not entirely from their censure free
 "Who judge our failings with severity.
 "The very care he took to keep his name 230
 "Stainless, with some was evidence of shame.
 "Jane heard of this, and she replied, 'Enough ;
 " 'Prove but the facts, and I resist not proof ;
 " 'Nor is my heart so easy as to love
 " 'The man my judgment bids me not approve.'
 "But yet that heart a secret joy confess'd,
 "To find no slander on the youth would rest ;
 "His was, in fact, such conduct, that a maid
 "Might think of marriage, and be not afraid ;
 "And she was pleased to find a spirit high, 240
 "Free from all fear, that spurn'd hypocrisy.
 " 'What fears my sister ?' said the partial fair,
 "For Lucy fear'd,— 'Why tell me to beware ?
 " 'No smooth deceitful varnish can I find ;
 " 'His is a spirit generous, free, and kind ;
 " 'And all his flaws are seen, all floating in his mind. }
 " 'A little boldness in his speech. What then ? }
 " 'It is the failing of these generous men.
 " 'A little vanity, but—O ! my dear,
 " 'They all would show it, were they all sincere. 250
 " 'But come, agreed ; we'll lend each other eyes
 " 'To see our favourites, when they wear disguise ;
 " 'And all those errors that will then be shown
 " 'Uninfluenced by the workings of our own.'
 "Thus lived the sisters, far from power removed,
 "And far from need, both loving and beloved.
 "Thus grew, as myrtles grow ; I grieve at heart
 "That I have pain and sorrow to impart.

"But so it is, the sweetest herbs that grow
 "In the lone vale, where sweetest waters flow, 260
 "Ere drops the blossom, or appears the fruit,
 "Feel the vile grub, and perish at the root;
 "And, in a quick and premature decay,
 "Breathe the pure fragrance of their life away.
 "A town was near, in which the buildings all
 "Were large, but one pre-eminently tall—
 "An huge high house. Without there was an air
 "Of lavish cost; no littleness was there;
 "But room for servants, horses, whiskies, gigs,
 "And walls for pines and peaches, grapes and figs; 270
 "Bright on the sloping glass the sun-beams shone,
 "And brought the summer of all climates on.
 "Here wealth its prowess to the eye display'd,
 "And here advanced the seasons, there delay'd;
 "Bid the due heat each growing sweet refine,
 "Made the sun's light with grosser fire combine,
 "And to the Tropic gave the vigour of the Line. []
 "Yet, in the master of this wealth behold
 "A light vain coxcomb taken from his gold,
 "Whose busy brain was weak, whose boasting heart was 280 []
 cold.
 "O! how he talk'd to that believing town,
 "That he would give it riches and renown;
 "Cause a canal where treasures were to swim,
 "And they should owe their opulence to him!
 "In fact, of riches he insured a crop,
 "So they would give him but a seed to drop.
 "As used the alchymist his boasts to make,
 "'I give you millions for the mite I take:'
 "The mite they never could again behold,
 "The millions all were Eldorado gold. 290
 "By this professing man the country round
 "Was search'd to see where money could be found.
 "The thriven farmer, who had lived to spare,
 "Became an object of especial care;
 "He took the frugal tradesman by the hand,
 "And wish'd him joy of what he might command;
 "And the industrious servant, who had laid

THE SISTERS

"His saving by, it was his joy to aid ;
"Large talk, and hints of some productive plan
"Half named, won all his hearers to a man ; 300
"Uncertain projects drew them wondering on,
"And avarice listen'd till distrust was gone.
"But when to these dear girls he found his way,
"All easy, artless, innocent were they ;
"When he compell'd his foolish wife to be
"At once so great, so humble, and so free ;
"Whom others sought, nor always with success !
"But they were both her pride and happiness ;
"And she esteem'd them, but attended still
"To the vile purpose of her husband's will ; 310
"And, when she fix'd his snares about their mind,
"Respected those whom she essay'd to blind ;
"Nay with esteem she some compassion gave
"To the fair victims whom she would not save.

"The Banker's wealth and kindness were her themes,
"His generous plans, his patriotic schemes ;
"What he had done for some, a favourite few,
"What for his favourites still he meant to do ;
"Not that he always listen'd—which was hard—
"To her, when speaking of her great regard 320
"For certain friends—'but you, as I may say,
"Are his own choice—I am not jealous—nay !"

"Then came the man himself, and came with speed,
"As just from business of importance freed ;
"Or just escaping, came with looks of fire,
"As if he'd just attain'd his full desire ;
"As if Prosperity and he for life
"Were wed, and he was showing off his wife ;
"Pleased to display his influence, and to prove
"Himself the object of her partial love ; 330
"Perhaps with this was join'd the latent fear,
"The time would come when he should not be dear.

"Jane laugh'd at all their visits and parade,
"And call'd it friendship in an hot-house made ;
"A style of friendship suited to his taste,
"Brought on, and ripen'd, like his grapes, in haste ;
"She saw the wants that wealth in vain would hide,

"And all the tricks and littleness of pride ;
 "On all the wealth would creep the vulgar stain,
 "And grandeur strove to look itself in vain.

340

"Lucy perceived—but she replied, 'why heed
 "'Such small defects?—they're very kind indeed !'
 "And kind they were, and ready to produce
 "Their easy friendship, ever fit for use,
 "Friendship that enters into all affairs,
 "And daily wants, and daily gets, repairs.

"Hence at the cottage of the sisters stood
 "The Banker's steed—he was so very good ;
 "Oft through the roads, in weather foul or fair,
 "Their friend's gay carriage bore the gentle pair ;
 "His grapes and nectarines woo'd the virgins' hand ;
 "His books and roses were at their command,
 "And costly flowers—he took upon him shame
 "That he could purchase what he could not name.

350

"Lucy was vex'd to have such favours shown,
 "And they returning nothing of their own ;
 "Jane smiled, and begg'd her sister to believe,—
 "'We give at least as much as we receive.'

"Alas ! and more ; they gave their ears and eyes,
 "His splendor oft-times took them by surprise ;
 "And, if in Jane appear'd a meaning smile,
 "She gazed, admired, and paid respect the while ;
 "Would she had rested there ! Deluded maid,
 "She saw not yet the fatal price she paid ;
 "Saw not that wealth, though join'd with folly, grew
 "In her regard ; she smiled, but listen'd too ;
 "Nay would be grateful, she would trust her all,
 "Her funded source—to him a matter small ;
 "Taken for their sole use, and ever at their call,
 "To be improved—he knew not how indeed,
 "But he had methods—and they must succeed.

360

"This was so good, that Jane, in very pride,
 "To spare him trouble, for a while denied ;
 "And Lucy's prudence, though it was alarm'd,
 "Was by the splendor of the Banker charm'd ;
 "What was her paltry thousand pounds to him,
 "Who would expend five thousand on a whim ?

}
[]
370

THE SISTERS

"And then the portion of his wife was known ;
"But not that she reserved it for her own.

"Lucy her lover trusted with the fact, 380
"And frankly ask'd, 'if he approved the act ?'
"It promised well,' he said ; 'he could not tell
"How it might end, but sure it promised well ;
"He had himself a trifle in the Bank,
"And should be sore uneasy if it sank.'

"Jane from her lover had no wish to hide
"Her deed ; but was withheld by maiden pride ;
"To talk so early—as if one were sure
"Of being his ; she could not that endure.

"But when the sisters were apart, and when 390
"They freely spoke of their affairs and men,
"They thought with pleasure of the sum improved,
"And so presented to the men they loved.

"Things now proceeded in a quiet train ;
"No cause appear'd to murmur or complain ;
"The monied man, his ever-smiling dame,
"And their young darlings, in their carriage came.
"Jane's sprightly lover smiled their pomp to see,
"And ate their grapes, with gratitude and glee ;
"But with the freedom there was nothing mean, 400
"Humble, or forward, in his freedom seen ;
"His was the frankness of a mind that shows
"It knows itself, nor fears for what it knows.
"But Lucy's ever humble friend was awed
"By the profusion he could not applaud ;
"He seem'd indeed reluctant to partake
"Of the collation that he could not make ;
"And this was pleasant in the maiden's view,—
"Was modesty—was moderation too ;
"Though Jane esteem'd it meanness ; and she saw 410
"Fear in that prudence, avarice in that awe.

"But both the lovers now to town are gone ;
"By business one is call'd, by duty one ;
"While rumour rises—whether false or true
"The ladies knew not—it was known to few—
"But fear there was, and on their guardian-friend
"They for advice and comfort would depend

GEORGE CRABBE

“When rose the day ; meantime from Belmont-place
“Came vile report, predicting quick disgrace.
“’Twas told—the servants, who had met to thank 420
“Their lord for placing money in his Bank—
“Their kind free master, who such wages gave,
“And then increased whatever they could save—
“They who had heard they should their savings lose,
“Were weeping, swearing, drinking at the news ;
“And still the more they drank, the more they wept,
“And swore, and rail’d, and threaten’d, till they slept.
“The morning truth confirm’d the evening dread ;
“The Bank was broken, and the Banker fled ;
“But left a promise that his friends should have, 430
“To the last shilling—what his fortunes gave.
“The evil tidings reach’d the sister-pair,
“And one like Sorrow look’d, and one Despair ;
“They from each other turn’d th’ afflicting look,
“And loth and late the painful silence broke.
“‘The odious villain !’ Jane in wrath began ;
“In pity Lucy, ‘the unhappy man !
“‘When time and reason our affliction heal,
“‘How will the author of our sufferings feel ?’
“‘And let him feel, my sister—let the woes 440
“‘That he creates be bane to his repose !
“‘Let them be felt in his expiring hour,
“‘When death brings all his dread, and sin its power :
“‘Then let the busy foe of mortals state
“‘The pangs he caused, his own to aggravate !
“‘Wretch ! when our life was glad, our prospects gay,
“‘With savage hand to sweep them all away !
“‘And he must know it—know when he beguiled
“‘His easy victims—how the villain smiled !
“‘Oh ! my dear Lucy, could I see him crave 450
“‘The food denied, a beggar and a slave,
“‘To stony hearts he should with tears apply,
“‘And Pity’s self withhold the struggling sigh ;
“‘Or, if relenting weakness should extend
“‘Th’ extorted scrap that justice would not lend,
“‘Let it be poison’d by the curses deep
“‘Of every wretch whom he compels to weep !’

THE SISTERS

"Nay, my sweet sister, if you thought such pain
 "Were his, your pity would awake again ;
 "Your generous heart the wretch's grief would feel, 460
 "And you would soothe the pangs you could not heal.'

"Oh ! never, never,—I would still contrive
 "To keep the slave whom I abhorr'd alive ;
 "His tortured mind with horrid fears to fill,
 "Disturb his reason, and misguide his will ;
 "Heap coals of fire, to lie like melted lead,
 "Heavy and hot, on his accursed head ;
 "Not coals that mercy kindles hearts to melt,
 "But he should feel them hot as fires are felt,
 "Corroding ever, and through life the same,
 "Strong self-contempt and ever-burning shame ;
 "Let him so wretched live that he may fly
 "To desperate thoughts, and be resolved to die—
 "And then let death such frightful visions give,
 "That he may dread th' attempt, and beg to live !'
 "So spake th' indignant maid, when Lucy sigh'd,
 "And, waiting softer times, no more replied.

470

"Barlow was then in town ; and there he thought
 "Of bliss to come, and bargains to be bought ;
 "And was returning homeward—when he found 480
 "The Bank was broken, and his venture drown'd.

"'Ah ! foolish maid,' he cried, 'and what wilt thou
 "Say for thy friends and their excesses now ?
 "All now is brought completely to an end ;
 "What can the spendthrift now afford to spend ?
 "Had my advice been—true, I gave consent,
 "The thing was purposed ; what could I prevent ?

"Who will her idle taste for flowers supply—
 "Who send her grapes and peaches ? let her try ;—
 "There's none will give her, and she cannot buy. 490[]

"Yet would she not be grateful if she knew
 "What to my faith and generous love was due ?
 "Daily to see the man who took her hand,
 "When she had not a sixpence at command ;
 "Could I be sure that such a quiet mind
 "Would be for ever grateful, mild, and kind,
 "I might comply—but how will Bloomer act,

407

GEORGE CRABBE

"When he becomes acquainted with the fact?

"The loss to him is trifling—but the fall

"From independence, that to her is all;

500

"Now, should he marry, 'twill be shame to me

"To hold myself from my engagement free;

"And should he not, it will be double grace

"To stand alone in such a trying case.

"Come then, my Lucy, to thy faithful heart

"And humble love I will my views impart;

"Will see the grateful tear that softly steals

"Down the fair face and all thy joy reveals;

"And when I say it is a blow severe,

"Then will I add—restrain, my love, the tear,

510

"And take this heart, so faithful and so fond,

"Still bound to thine; and fear not for that bond."

"He said; and went, with purpose he believed

"Of generous nature—so is man deceived.

"Lucy determined that her lover's eye

"Should not distress nor supplication spy;

"That in her manner he should nothing find

"To indicate the weakness of her mind.

"He saw no eye that wept, no frame that shook;

"No fond appeal was made by word or look;

520

"Kindness there was, but join'd with some restraint;

"And traces of the late event were faint.

"He look'd for grief deploring, but perceives

"No outward token that she longer grieves;

"He had expected for his efforts praise,

"For he resolved the drooping mind to raise;

"She would, he judged, be humble, and afraid

"That he might blame her rashness and upbraid;

"And lo! he finds her in a quiet state,

"Her spirit easy and her air sedate:

530

"As if her loss was not a cause for pain,

"As if assured that he would make it gain.—

"Silent awhile, he told the morning news,

"And what he judged they might expect to lose;

"He thought himself, whatever some might boast,

"The composition would be small at most,

"Some shabby matter; she would see no more

THE SISTERS

"The tithe of what she held in hand before.

"How did her sister feel? and did she think

"Bloomer was honest, and would never shrink?

540

"But why that smile; is loss like yours so light

"That it can aught like merriment excite?

"Well, he is rich, we know, and can afford

"To please his fancy, and to keep his word;

"To him 'tis nothing; had he now a fear,

"He must the meanest of his sex appear;

"But the true honour, as I judge the case,

"Is both to feel the evil and embrace."

"Here Barlow stopp'd, a little vex'd to see

"No fear or hope, no dread or ecstasy.

550

"Calmly she spoke—"Your prospects, sir, and mine

"Are not the same—their union I decline;

"Could I believe the hand for which you strove

"Had yet its value, did you truly love,

"I had with thanks address'd you, and replied,

"Wait till your feelings and my own subside,

"Watch your affections, and, if still they live,

"What pride denies, my gratitude shall give."

"Ev'n then, in yielding, I had first believed

"That I conferr'd the favour, not received.

560

"You I release—nay, hear me—I impart

"Joy to your soul—I judge not of your heart.

"Think'st thou a being, to whom God has lent

"A feeling mind, will have her bosom rent

"By man's reproaches? Sorrow will be thine,

"For all thy pity prompts thee to resign!

"Think'st thou that meekness' self would condescend

"To take the husband when she scorns the friend?

"Forgive the frankness, and rejoice for life

"Thou art not burden'd with so poor a wife.

570

"Go! and be happy—tell, for the applause

"Of hearts like thine, we parted, and the cause

"Give, as it pleases.' With a foolish look

"That a dull school-boy fixes on his book

"That he resigns, with mingled shame and joy,

"So Barlow went, confounded like the boy.

"Jane, while she wept to think her sister's pain

409

GEORGE CRABBE

"Was thus increased, felt infinite disdain;
"Bound as she was, and wedded by the ties
"Of love and hope, that care and craft despise,
"She could but wonder that a man, whose taste
"And zeal for money had a Jew disgraced,
"Should love her sister; yet with this surprise,
"She felt a little exultation rise;
"Hers was a lover who had always held
"This man as base, by generous scorn impell'd,
"And yet, as one, of whom for Lucy's sake
"He would a civil distant notice take.

580

"Lucy, with sadden'd heart and temper mild,
"Bow'd to correction, like an humbled child,
"Who feels the parent's kindness, and who knows
"Such the correction he who loves bestows.

590

"Attending always, but attending more
"When sorrow ask'd his presence than before,
"Tender and ardent, with the kindest air
"Came Bloomer, fortune's error to repair;
"Words sweetly soothing spoke the happy youth,
"With all the tender earnestness of truth.

"There was no doubt of his intention now—
"He will his purpose with his love avow;
"So judged the maid; yet, waiting, she admired
"His still delaying what he most desired;
"Till, from her spirit's agitation free,
"She might determine when the day should be.
"With such facility the partial mind
"Can the best motives for its favourites find.

600

"Of this he spake not, but he stay'd beyond
"His usual hour—attentive still and fond;—
"The hand yet firmer to the hand he prest,
"And the eye rested where it loved to rest;
"Then took he certain freedoms, yet so small
"That it was prudish so the things to call;
"Things they were not—'Describe'—that none can do,
"They had been nothing had they not been new;
"It was the manner and the look; a maid,
"Afraid of such, is foolishly afraid;
"For what could she explain? The piercing eye

610

THE SISTERS

"Of jealous fear could nought amiss descry.

"But some concern now rose; the youth would seek

"Jane by herself, and then would nothing speak, 630

"Before not spoken; there was still delay,

"Vexatious, wearying, wasting, day by day.

"*"He does not surely trifle!"* Heaven forbid!

"She now should doubly scorn him if he did.

"Ah! more than this, unlucky girl! is thine;

"Thou must the fondest views of life resign;

"And in the very time resign them too,

"When they were brightening on the eager view.

"I will be brief,—nor have I heart to dwell

"On crimes they almost share who paint them well. 630

"There was a moment's softness, and it seem'd

"Discretion slept, or so the lover dream'd;

"And, watching long the now confiding maid,

"He thought her guardless, and grew less afraid;

"Led to the theme that he had shunn'd before,

"He used a language he must use no more—

"For if it answers, there is no more need,

"And no more trial, should it not succeed.

"Then made he that attempt, in which to fail

"Is shameful,—still more shameful to prevail. 640

"Then was there lightning in that eye that shed

"Its beams upon him—and his frenzy fled;

"Abject and trembling at her feet he laid,

"Despised and scorn'd by the indignant maid,

"Whose spirits in their agitation rose,

"Him, and her own weak pity, to oppose:

"As liquid silver in the tube mounts high,

"Then shakes and settles as the storm goes by.

"While yet the lover stay'd, the maid was strong,

"But when he fled, she droop'd and felt the wrong— 650

"Felt the alarming chill, th' enfeebled breath,

"Closed the quick eye, and sank in transient death.

"So Lucy found her; and then first that breast

"Knew anger's power, and own'd the stranger guest.

"*"And is this love? Ungenerous! Has he too*

"*'Been mean and abject? Is no being true?'*

"For Lucy judged that, like her prudent swain,

GEORGE CRABBE

"Bloomer had talk'd of what a man might gain ;
 "She did not think a man on earth was found,
 "A wounded bosom, while it bleeds, to wound ; 660
 "Thought not that mortal could be so unjust,
 "As to deprive affliction of its trust ;
 "Thought not a lover could the hope enjoy,
 "That must the peace he should promote destroy ;
 "Thought not, in fact, that in the world were those,
 "Who to their tenderest friends are worse than foes,
 "Who win the heart, deprive it of its care,
 "Then plant remorse and desolation there.
 "Ah ! cruel he, who can that heart deprive
 "Of all that keeps its energy alive ; 670
 "Can see consign'd to shame the trusting fair,
 "And turn confiding fondness to despair ;
 "To watch that time—a name is not assign'd
 "For crime so odious, nor shall learning find.
 "Now, from that day has Lucy laid aside
 "Her proper cares, to be her sister's guide,
 "Guard, and protector. At their uncle's farm
 "They past the period of their first alarm,
 "But soon retired, nor was he grieved to learn
 "They made their own affairs their own concern. 680
 "I knew not then their worth ; and, had I known,
 "Could not the kindness of a friend have shown ;
 "For men they dreaded ; they a dwelling sought,
 "And there the children of the village taught ;
 "There, firm and patient, Lucy still depends
 "Upon her efforts, not upon her friends ;
 "She is with persevering strength endued,
 "And can be cheerful—for she will be good.
 "Jane too will strive the daily tasks to share,
 "That so employment may contend with care ; 690
 "Not power, but will, she shows, and looks about
 "On her small people, who come in and out ;
 "And seems of what they need, or she can do, in doubt. }
 "There sits the chubby crew on seats around,
 "While she, all rueful at the sight and sound,
 "Shrinks from the free approaches of the tribe,
 "Whom she attempts, lamenting, to describe ;

THE SISTERS

"With stains the idlers gather'd in their way,
 "The simple stains of mud, and mould, and clay,
 "And compound of the streets, of what we dare not say ; }
 "With hair uncomb'd, grimed face, and piteous look, 701
 "Each heavy student takes the odious book,
 "And on the lady casts a glance of fear,
 "Who draws the garment close as he comes near ;
 "She then for Lucy's mild forbearance tries,
 "And from her pupils turns her brilliant eyes,
 "Making new efforts, and with some success,
 "To pay attention while the students guess ;
 "Who to the gentler mistress fain would glide,
 "And dread their station at the lady's side. 710
 "Such is their fate ;—there is a friendly few
 "Whom they receive, and there is chance for you ;
 "Their school, and something gather'd from the wreck
 "Of that bad Bank, keeps poverty in check ;
 "And true respect, and high regard, are theirs,
 "The children's profit, and the [parents'] prayers.
 "With Lucy rests the one peculiar care,
 "That few must see, and none with her may share ;
 "More dear than hope can be, more sweet than pleasures }
 are. 720
 "For her sad sister needs the care of love
 "That will direct her, that will not reprove,
 "But waits to warn : for Jane will walk alone,
 "Will sing in low and melancholy tone ;
 "Will read or write, or to her plants will run,
 "To shun her friends,—alas ! her thoughts to shun.
 "It is not love alone disturbs her rest,
 "But loss of all that ever hope possess'd :
 "Friends ever kind, life's lively pleasures, ease,
 "When her enjoyments could no longer please ;
 "These were her comforts then ! she has no more of these. }
 "Wrapt in such thoughts, she feels her mind astray, 731
 "But knows 'tis true that she has lost her way ;
 "For Lucy's smile will check the sudden flight,
 "And one kind look let in the wonted light.
 "Fits of long silence she endures, then talks
 "Too much—with too much ardour, as she walks ;

"But still the shrubs that she admires dispense
 "Their balmy freshness to the hurried sense,
 "And she will watch their progress, and attend
 "Her flowering favourites as a guardian friend;
 "To sun or shade she will her sweets remove,
 "'And here,' she says, 'I may with safety love.'

740

"But there are hours when on that bosom steals
 "A rising terror—then indeed she feels—
 "Feels how she loved the promised good, and how
 "She feels the failure of the promise now.

"That other spoiler did as robbers do,
 "Made poor our state, but not disgraceful too.
 "This spoiler shames me, and I look within
 "To find some cause that drew him on to sin;
 "He and the wretch who could thy worth forsake
 "Are the fork'd adder and the loathsome snake;
 "Thy snake could slip in villain-fear away,
 "But had no fang to fasten on his prey.

750

"Oh! my dear Lucy, I had thought to live
 "With all the comforts easy fortunes give;
 "A wife caressing, and caress'd—a friend,
 "Whom he would guide, advise, consult, defend,
 "And make his equal;—then I fondly thought
 "Among superior creatures to be brought;
 "And, while with them, delighted to behold
 "No eye averted, and no bosom cold;—
 "Then at my home, a mother, to embrace
 "My———Oh! my sister, it was surely base!
 "I might forget the wrong; I cannot the disgrace.

760

}
[]

"Oh! when I saw that triumph in his eyes,
 "I felt my spirits with his own arise;
 "I call'd it joy, and said, the generous youth
 "Laughs at my loss—no trial for his truth;
 "It is a trifle he can not lament,
 "A sum but equal to his annual rent;
 "And yet that loss, the cause of every ill,
 "Has made me poor, and him—'

770

"O! poorer still;
 "Poorer, my Jane, and far below thee now:
 "The injurer he,—the injured sufferer thou;

THE SISTERS

“And shall such loss afflict thee?”—

“Lose I not

“With him what fortune could in life allot?

“Lose I not hope, life’s cordial, and the views

“Of an aspiring spirit?—O! I lose

“Whate’er the happy feel, whate’er the sanguine choose. } 781

“Would I could lose this bitter sense of wrong,

“And sleep in peace—but it will not be long!

“And here is something, Lucy, in my brain—

“I know not what—it is a cure for pain;

“But is not death!—no beckoning hand I see,

“No voice I hear that comes alone to me;

“It is not death, but change; I am not now

“As I was once—nor can I tell you how;

“Nor is it madness—ask, and you shall find

“In my replies the soundness of my mind: 790

“O! I should be a trouble all day long;

“A very torment, if my head were wrong.’

“At times there is upon her features seen

“What moves suspicion—she is too serene.

“Such is the motion of a drunken man,

“Who steps sedately, just to show he can.

“Absent at times she will her mother call,

“And cry at mid-day, ‘then good night to all.’

“But most she thinks there will some good ensue

“From something done, or what she is to do; 800

“Long wrapt in silence, she will then assume

“An air of business, and shake off her gloom;

“Then cry exulting, ‘O! it must succeed,

“There are ten thousand readers—all men read:

“There are my writings—you shall never spend

“Your precious moments to so poor an end;

“Our [peasants’] children may be taught by those

“Who have no powers such wonders to compose;

“So let me call them—what the world allows,

“Surely a poet without shame avows; 810

“Come, let us count what numbers we believe

“Will buy our work—Ah! sister, do you grieve?

“You weep; there’s something I have said amiss,

“And vex’d my sister—What a world is this!

GEORGE CRABBE

“And how I wander!—Where has fancy run?
“Is there no poem? Have I nothing done?
“Forgive me, Lucy, I had fix’d my eye,
“And so my mind, on works that cannot die,
“*Marmion* and *Lara* yonder in the case;
“And so I put me in the poet’s place. 820
“Still, be not frighten’d; it is but a dream;
“I am not lost, bewilder’d though I seem;
“I will obey thee—but suppress thy fear—
“I am at ease—then why that silly tear?’
“Jane, as these melancholy fits invade
“The busy fancy, seeks the deepest shade;
“She walks in ceaseless hurry, till her mind
“Will short repose in verse and music find;
“Then her own songs to some soft tune she sings,
“And laughs, and calls them melancholy things; 830
“Not frenzy all; in some her erring Muse
“Will sad, afflicting, tender strains infuse;
“Sometimes on death she will her lines compose,
“Or give her serious page of solemn prose;
“And still those favourite plants her fancy please,
“And give to care and anguish rest and ease.

“Let me not have this gloomy view,
“About my room, around my bed;
“But morning roses, wet with dew,
“To cool my burning brows instead. 840
“As flow’rs that once in Eden grew,
“Let them their fragrant spirits shed,
“And every day the sweets renew,
“Till I, a fading flower, am dead.

“Oh! let the herbs I loved to rear
“Give to my sense their perfumed breath;
“Let them be placed about my bier,
“And grace the gloomy house of death.
“I’ll have my grave beneath an hill,
“Where, only Lucy’s self shall know; 850

THE SISTERS

“Where runs the pure pellucid rill
“Upon its gravelly bed below ;
“There violets on the borders blow,
“And insects their soft light display,
“Till, as the morning sun-beams glow,
“The cold phosphoric fires decay.

“That is the grave to Lucy shown,
“The soil a pure and silver sand ;
“The green cold moss above it grown,
“Unluck'd of all but maiden hand :
“In virgin earth, till then unturn'd,
“There let my maiden form be laid,
“Nor let my changed clay be spurn'd,
“Nor for new guest that bed be made.

860

“There will the lark, the lamb, in sport,
“In air, on earth, securely play,
“And Lucy to my grave resort,
“As innocent, but not so gay.
“I will not have the churchyard ground,
“With bones all black and ugly grown,
“To press my shivering body round,
“Or on my wasted limbs be thrown.

870

“With ribs and skulls I will not sleep,
“In clammy beds of cold blue clay,
“Through which the ringed earth-worms creep,
“And on the shrouded bosom prey ;
“I will not have the bell proclaim
“When those sad marriage rites begin,
“And boys, without regard or shame,
“Press the vile mouldering masses in.

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“Say not, it is beneath my care ;
“I cannot these cold truths allow ;
“These thoughts may not afflict me there,
“But, O ! they vex and tease me now.
“Raise not a turf, nor set a stone,
“That man a maiden's grave may trace ;

“But thou, my Lucy, come alone,
 “And let affection find the place.

“O ! take me from a world I hate—
 “Men cruel, selfish, sensual, cold ;
 “And, in some pure and blessed state,
 “Let me my sister minds behold :
 “From gross and sordid views refined,
 “Our heaven of spotless love to share,
 “For only generous souls design’d,
 “And not a man to meet us there.”

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TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK IX.

THE PRECEPTOR HUSBAND.

The Morning Ride—Conversation—Character of one whom they meet—His early Habits and Mode of Thinking—The Wife whom he would choose—The one chosen—His Attempts to teach—In History—In Botany—The Lady's Proficiency—His Complaint—Her Defence and Triumph—The Trial ends.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK IX.

THE PRECEPTOR HUSBAND.

“WHOM pass’d we musing near the woodman’s shed,
“Whose horse not only carried him but led,
“That his grave rider might have slept the time,
“Or solved a problem, or composed a rhyme?
“A more abstracted man within my view
“Has never come—He recollected you.”

“Yes—he was thoughtful—thinks the whole day long,
“Deeply, and chiefly that he once thought wrong;
“He thought a strong and kindred mind to trace
“In the soft outlines of a trifler’s face. 10

“Poor Finch! I knew him when at school—a boy
“Who might be said his labours to enjoy;
“So young a pedant that he always took
“The girl to dance who most admired her book;
“And would the butler and the cook surprise,
“Who listen’d to his Latin exercise;
“The matron’s self the praise of Finch avow’d,
“He was so serious, and he read so loud.
“But yet, with all this folly and conceit,
“The lines he wrote were elegant and neat; 20
“And early promise in his mind appear’d
“Of noble efforts when by reason clear’d.

“And when he spoke of wives, the boy would say,
“His should be skill’d in Greek and algebra;
“For who would talk with one to whom his themes,

THE PRECEPTOR HUSBAND

"And favourite studies, were no more than dreams?
"For this, though courteous, gentle, and humane,
"The boys contemn'd and hated him as vain,
"Stiff and pedantic.—"

"Did the man enjoy,
"In after life, the visions of the boy?"— 30

"At least they form'd his wishes, they were yet
"The favourite views on which his mind was set:
"He quaintly said, how happy must they prove,
"Who, loving, study—or who, studious, love;
"Who feel their minds with sciences imbued,
"And their warm hearts by beauty's force subdued.

"His widow'd mother, who the world had seen,
"And better judge of either sex had been,
"Told him that, just as their affairs were placed,
"In some respects he must forego his taste; 40
"That every beauty, both of form and mind,
"Must be by him, if unendow'd, resign'd;
"That wealth was wanted for their joint affairs;
"His sisters' portions, and the Hall's repairs.

"The son assented—and the wife must bring
"Wealth, learning, beauty, ere he gave the ring;
"But as these merits, when they all unite,
"Are not produced in every soil and site;
"And when produced are not the certain gain
"Of him who would these precious things obtain; 50

"Our patient student waited many a year,
"Nor saw this phoenix in his walks appear.
"But, as views mended in the joint estate,
"He would a something in his points abate:
"Give him but learning, beauty, temper, sense,
"And he would then the happy state commence.

"The mother sigh'd, but she at last agreed;
"And now the son was likely to succeed.
"Wealth is substantial good the fates allot:
"We know we have it, or we have it not; 60
"But all those graces which men highly rate
"Their minds themselves imagine and create;
"And therefore Finch was in a way to find
"A good that much depended on his mind.

GEORGE CRABBE

"He look'd around, observing, till he saw
 "Augusta Dallas! when he felt an awe
 "Of so much beauty and commanding grace,
 "That well became the honours of her race.
 "This lady never boasted of the trash
 "That commerce brings: she never spoke of cash; 70
 "The gentle blood that ran in every vein
 "At all such notions blush'd in pure disdain.—
 "Wealth once relinquish'd, there was all beside,
 "As Finch believed, that could adorn a bride;
 "He could not gaze upon the form and air,
 "Without concluding all was right and fair;
 "Her mild but dignified reserve suppress
 "All free inquiry—but his mind could rest,
 "Assured that all was well, and in that view was blest. }
 "And now he asked, 'am I the happy man []
 "Who can deserve her? is there one who can?' 80
 "His mother told him, he possess'd the land
 "That puts a man in heart to ask a hand;
 "All who possess it feel they bear about
 "A spell that puts a speedy end to doubt;
 "But Finch was modest—'May it then be thought
 "That she can so be gained?'—'She may be sought.—' }
 "Can love with land be won?'—'By land is beauty bought. []
 "Do not, dear Charles, with indignation glow,
 "All value that the want of which they know; 90
 "Nor do I blame her; none that worth denies;
 "But can my son be sure of what he buys?
 "Beauty she has, but with it can you find
 "The inquiring spirit, or the studious mind?
 "This wilt thou need who art to thinking prone,
 "And minds unpair'd had better think alone;
 "Then how unhappy will the husband be,
 "Whose sole associate spoils his company?'
 "This he would try; but all such trials prove
 "Too mighty for a man disposed to love; 100
 "He whom the magic of a face enchains
 "But little knowledge of the mind obtains;
 "If by his tender heart the man is led,
 "He finds how erring is the soundest head.

THE PRECEPTOR HUSBAND

"The lady saw his purpose; she could meet"
 "The man's inquiry, and his aim defeat;
 "She had a studied flattery in her look;
 "She could be seen retiring with a book;
 "She by attending to his speech could prove
 "That she for learning had a fervent love— 110
 "Yet love alone, she modestly declared;
 "She must be spared inquiry, and was spared;
 "Of her poor studies she was not so weak
 "As in his presence, or at all, to speak;
 "But to discourse with him who, all agreed,
 "[Had] read so much, would be absurd indeed;
 "Ask what he might, she was so much a dunce
 "She would confess her ignorance at once.
 "All this the man believed not—doom'd to grieve
 "For this belief, he this would not believe: 120
 "No! he was quite in raptures to discern
 "That love, and that avidity to learn.
 "'Could she have found,' she said, 'a friend, a guide,
 "'Like him, to study had been all her pride;
 "'But, doom'd so long to frivolous employ,
 "'How could she those superior views enjoy?
 "'The day might come—a happy day for her,
 "'When she might choose the ways she should prefer.'
 "Then too he learn'd in accidental way,
 "How much she grieved to lose the given day 130
 "In dissipation wild, in visitation gay. }
 "Happy, most happy, must the woman prove
 "Who proudly looks on him she vows to love;
 "Who can her humble acquisitions state,
 "That he will praise, at least will tolerate.
 "Still the cool mother sundry doubts express'd,—
 "'How! is Augusta graver than the rest?
 "'There are three others: they are not inclined
 "'To feed with precious food the empty mind;
 "'Whence this strong relish?' 'It is very strong,' 140
 "Replied the son, 'and has possess'd her long;
 "'Increased indeed, I may presume, by views—
 "'We may suppose—ah! may she not refuse?'
 "'Fear not!—I see the question must be tried,

“Nay, is determined—let us to your bride.”

“They soon were wedded, and the nymph appear’d

“By all her promised excellence endear’d :

“Her words were kind, were cautious, and were few,

“And she was proud—of what her husband knew.

“Weeks pass’d away, some five or six, before, 150

“Bless’d in the present, Finch could think of more.

“A month was next upon a journey spent,

“When to the Lakes the fond companions went ;

“Then the gay town received them, and, at last,

“Home to their mansion, man and wife, they pass’d.

“And now in quiet way they came to live

“On what their fortune, love, and hopes would give.

“The honied moon had nought but silver rays,

“And shone benignly on their early days ;

“The second moon a light less vivid shed, 160

“And now the silver rays were tinged with lead.

“They now began to look beyond the Hall,

“And think what friends would make a morning-call ;

“Their former appetites return’d, and now

“Both could their wishes and their tastes avow ;

“’Twas now no longer ‘just what you approve,’

“But ‘let the wild fowl be to-day, my love.’

“In fact the senses, drawn aside by force

“Of a strong passion, sought their usual course.

“Now to her music would the wife repair, 170

“To which he listen’d once with eager air ;

“When there was so much harmony within,

“That any note was sure its way to win ;

“But now the sweet melodious tones were sent

“From the struck chords, and none cared where they went.

“Full well we know that many a favourite air

“That charms a party fails to charm a pair ;

“And as Augusta play’d she look’d around,

“To see if one was dying at the sound ;

“But all were gone—a husband, wrapt in gloom, 180

“Stalk’d careless, listless, up and down the room.

“And now ’tis time to fill that ductile mind

“With knowledge, from his stores of various kind.

“His mother, in a peevish mood, had ask’d,

THE PRECEPTOR HUSBAND

- “Does your Augusta profit? is she task’d?”
“Madam!” he cried, offended with her looks,
“There’s time for all things, and not all for books :
“Just on one’s marriage to sit down, and prate
“On points of learning, is a thing I hate.—’
“‘Tis right, my son, and it appears to me, 190
“If deep your hatred, you must well agree.’
“Finch was too angry for a man so wise,
“And said, ‘Insinuation I despise !
“Nor do I wish to have a mind so full
“Of learned trash—it makes a woman dull :
“Let it suffice, that I in her discern
“An aptitude, and a desire to learn.—’
“The matron smiled, but she observed a frown
“On her son’s brow, and calmly sat her down,
“Leaving the truth to Time, who solves our doubt, 200
“By bringing his all-glorious daughter out—
“Truth! for whose beauty all their love profess ;
“And yet how many think it ugliness!
“‘Augusta, love,’ said Finch, ‘while you engage
“In that embroidery, let me read a page.
“Suppose it Hume’s; indeed he takes a side,
“But still an author need not be our guide ;
“And, as he writes with elegance and ease,
“Do now attend—he will be sure to please.
“Here at the Revolution we commence— 210
“We date, you know, our liberties from hence.’
“‘Yes, sure,’ Augusta answer’d with a smile ;
“Our teacher always talk’d about his style,
“When we about the Revolution read,
“And how the martyrs to the flames were led :
“The good old bishops, I forget their names,
“But they were all committed to the flames ;
“Maidens and widows, bachelors and wives—
“The very babes and sucklings lost their lives.
“I read it all in Guthrie at the school— 220
“What now!—I know you took me for a fool ;
“There were five bishops taken from the stall,
“And twenty widows, I remember all ;
“And by this token, that our teacher tried

GEORGE CRABBE

“‘To cry for pity, till she howl’d and cried.’

“‘True, true, my love, but you mistake the thing—

“‘The Revolution that made William king

“‘Is what I mean; the Reformation you,

“‘In Edward and Elizabeth.’—‘Tis true;

“‘But the nice reading is the love between

230

“‘The brave Lord Essex and the cruel queen;

“‘And how he sent the ring to save his head,

“‘Which the false lady kept till he was dead.

“‘That is all true; now read, and I’ll attend;

“‘But was not she a most deceitful friend?

“‘It was a monstrous, vile, and treacherous thing

“‘To show no pity, and to keep the ring;

“‘But the queen shook her in her dying bed,

“‘And ‘God forgive you!’ was the word she said;

“‘Not I for certain;’—Come, I will attend;

240

“‘So read the Revolutions to an end.’

“‘Finch, with a timid, strange, inquiring look,

“‘Softly and slowly laid aside the book

“‘With sigh inaudible—‘Come, never heed,’

“‘Said he, recovering; ‘now I cannot read.’

“‘They walk’d at leisure through their wood and groves,

“‘In fields and lanes, and talk’d of plants and loves,

“‘And loves of plants.—Said Finch, ‘Augusta, dear,

“‘You said you loved to learn,—were you sincere?

“‘Do you remember that you told me once

250

“‘How much you grieved, and said you were a dunce?

“‘That is, you wanted information. Say,

“‘What would you learn? I will direct your way.’

“‘Goodness!’ said she, ‘what meanings you discern

“‘In a few words! I said I wish’d to learn,

“‘And so I think I did; and you replied,

“‘The wish was good: what would you now beside?

“‘Did not you say it show’d an ardent mind;

“‘And pray what more do you expect to find?’

“‘My dear Augusta, could you wish indeed

260

“‘For any knowledge, and not then proceed?

“‘That is not wishing—’

“‘Mercy! how you tease!

“‘You knew I said it with a view to please;

THE PRECEPTOR HUSBAND

“A compliment to you, and quite enough—
“You would not kill me with that puzzling stuff!
“Sure I might say I wish’d; but that is still
“Far from a promise: it is not,—‘I will.’
“But come, to show you that I will not hide
“My proper talents, you shall be my guide;
“And lady Boothby, when we meet, shall cry, 270
“She’s quite as good a botanist as I.’
“‘Right, my Augusta;’ and, in manner grave,
“Finch his first lecture on the science gave;
“An introduction—and he said, ‘My dear,
“Your thought was happy—let us persevere;
“And let no trifling cause our work retard.’
“Agreed the lady, but she fear’d it hard.
“Now o’er the grounds they rambled many a mile;
“He show’d the flowers, the stamina, the style,
“Calix and corol, pericarp and fruit, 280
“And all the plant produces, branch and root;
“Of these he treated, every varying shape,
“Till poor Augusta panted to escape.
“He show’d the various foliage plants produce,
“Lunate and lyrate, runcinate, retuse;
“Long were the learned words, and urged with force,
“Panduriform, pinnatifid, premorse,
“Latent, and patent, papulous, and plane—
“‘Oh!’ said the pupil, ‘it will turn my brain.’
“‘Fear not,’ he answer’d, and again, intent 290
“To fill that mind, o’er class and order went;
“And stopping, ‘Now,’ said he, ‘my love, attend.’
“‘I do,’ said she, ‘but when will be an end?’—
“‘When we have made some progress—now begin,
“‘Which is the stigma, show me with the pin;
“‘Come, I have told you, dearest, let me see,
“‘Times very many—tell it now to me.’
“‘Stigma! I know,—the things with yellow heads,
“‘That shed the dust, and grow upon the threads;
“‘You call them wives and husbands, but you know 300
“‘That is a joke—here, look, and I will show
“‘All I remember.’—Doleful was the look
“Of the preceptor, when he shut his book—

GEORGE CRABBE

"The system brought to aid them in their view,
"And now with sighs return'd—'It will not do.'

"A handsome face first led him to suppose,
"There must be talent with such looks as those;
"The want of talent taught him now to find
"The face less handsome with so poor a mind;
"And half the beauty faded, when he found
"His cherish'd hopes were falling to the ground.

310

"Finch lost his spirit; but e'en then he sought
"For fancied powers: she might in time be taught.
"Sure there was nothing in that mind to fear;
"The favourite study did not yet appear.—

"Once he express'd a doubt if she could look
"For five succeeding minutes on a book;
"When, with awaken'd spirit, she replied,
"He was mistaken, and she would be tried.'

"With this delighted, he new hopes express'd—
"How do I know?—She may abide the test?

320

"Men I have known, and famous in their day,
"Who were by chance directed in their way.

"I have been hasty.—Well, Augusta, well,
"What is your favourite reading? prithee tell;
"Our different tastes may different books require—

"Yours I may not peruse, and yet admire:
"Do then explain'—'Good Heaven!' said she, in haste,
"How do I hate these lectures upon taste!"

"I lecture not, my love; but do declare—
"You read, you say—what your attainments are.'

330

"Oh! you believe,' said she, 'that other things
"Are read as well as histories of kings,

"And loves of plants, with all that simple stuff
"About their sex, of which I know enough.

"Well, if I must, I will my studies name,
"Blame if you please—I know you love to blame.

"When all our childish books were set apart,
"The first I read was 'Wanderings of the Heart:'

"It was a story, where was done a deed

340

"So dreadful, that alone I fear'd to read.

"The next was 'The Confessions of a Nun—'
"Twas quite a shame such evil should be done;

THE PRECEPTOR HUSBAND

“Nun of—no matter for the creature’s name,
 “For there are girls no nunnery can tame.
 “Then was the story of the Haunted Hall,
 “Where the huge picture nodded from the wall
 “When the old lord look’d up with trembling dread,
 “And I grew pale, and shudder’d as I read.
 “Then came the tales of Winters, Summers, Springs, 350
 “At Bath and Brighton,—they were pretty things!
 “No ghosts nor spectres there were heard or seen,
 “But all was love and flight to Gretna-green.
 “Perhaps your greater learning may despise
 “What others like, and there your wisdom lies—
 “Well! do not frown—I read the tender tales
 “Of lonely cots, retreats in silent vales
 “For maids forsaken, and suspected wives,
 “Against whose peace some foe his plot contrives;
 “With all the hidden schemes that none can clear 360
 “Till the last book, and then the ghosts appear.
 “I read all plays that on the boards succeed,
 “And all the works that ladies ever read—
 “Shakspeare, and all the rest—I did, indeed,—
 “Ay! you may stare; but, sir, believe it true
 “That we can read and learn, as well as you.
 “I would not boast,—but I could act a scene
 “In any play, before I was fifteen.
 “Nor is this all; for many are the times
 “I read in Pope and Milton, prose and rhymes;
 “They were our lessons, and, at ten years old, 370
 “I could repeat—but now enough is told.
 “Sir, I can tell you I my mind applied
 “To all my studies, and was not denied
 “Praise for my progress—Are you satisfied?
 “Entirely, madam! else were I possess’d
 “By a strong spirit who could never rest.
 “Yes! yes, no more I question—here I close
 “The theme for ever—let us to repose.”

360

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TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK X.

THE OLD BACHELOR.

A Friend arrives at the Hall—Old Bachelors and Maids—Relation of one—His Parents—The first Courtship—The second—The third—Long Interval—Travel—Decline of Life—The fourth Lady—Conclusion.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK X.

THE OLD BACHELOR.

SAVE their kind friend the rector, Richard yet
Had not a favourite of his brother met ;
Now at the Hall that welcome guest appear'd,
By trust, by trials, and by time endear'd ;
Of him the grateful 'squire his love profess'd,
And full regard—he was of friends the best ;
“ Yet not to him alone this good I owe,
“ This social pleasure that our friends bestow ;
“ The sex that wrought in earlier life my woes,
“ With loss of time who murder'd my repose, 10
“ They to my joys administer, nor vex
“ Me more ; and now I venerate the sex ;
“ And boast the friendship of a spinster kind,
“ Cheerful and pleasant, to her fate resign'd ;
“ Then by her side my bachelor I place,
“ And hold them honours to the human race.
“ Yet these are they in tale and song display'd,
“ The peevish man, and the repining maid ;
“ Creatures made up of misery and spite,
“ Who taste no pleasures, except those they blight ; 20
“ From whom th' affrighten'd niece and nephew fly—
“ Fear'd while they live, and useless till they die.
“ Not such these friends of mine ; they never meant
“ That youth should so be lost, or life be spent.
“ They had warm passions, tender hopes, desires
“ That youth indulges, and that love inspires ;

GEORGE CRABBE

"But fortune frown'd on their designs, displaced
 "The views of hope, and love's gay dreams disgraced;
 "Took from the soul her sunny views, and spread
 "A cloud of dark but varying gloom instead. 30
 "And shall we these with ridicule pursue,
 "Because they did not what they could not do?
 "If they their lot preferr'd, still why the jest
 "On those who took the way they judged the best?
 "But if they sought a change, and sought in vain,
 "'Tis worse than brutal to deride their pain—
 "But you will see them; see the man I praise,
 "The kind protector in my troubled days,
 "Himself in trouble; you shall see him now,
 "And learn his worth! and my applause allow." 40

This friend appear'd, with talents form'd to please,
 And with some looks of sprightliness and ease;
 To him indeed the ills of life were known,
 But misery had not made him all her own.

They spoke on various themes, and George design'd
 To show his brother this, the favourite mind;
 To lead the friend, by subjects he could choose,
 To paint himself, his life, and earlier views,
 What he was bless'd to hope, what he was doom'd to lose. []

They spoke of marriage, and he understood
 Their call on him, and said, "It is not good
 "To be alone, although alone to be
 "Is freedom; so are men in deserts free;
 "Men who unyoked and unattended groan,
 "Condemn'd and grieved to walk their way alone.
 "Whatever ills a married pair betide,
 "Each feels a stay, a comfort, or a guide;
 "'Not always comfort,' will our wits reply.—
 "Wits are not judges, nor the cause shall try. 50

"Have I not seen, when grief his visits paid,
 "That they were easier by communion made?
 "True, with the quiet times and days serene,
 "There have been flying clouds of care and spleen;
 "But is not man, the solitary, sick
 "Of his existence, sad and splenetic?
 "And who will help him, when such evils come, 60

THE OLD BACHELOR

"To bear the pressure or to clear the gloom?"

"Do you not find, that joy within the breast

"Of the unwedded man is soon suppress'd;

"While, to the bosom of a wife convey'd,

70

"Increase is by participation made?—

"The lighted lamp that gives another light,

"Say, is it by th' imparted blaze less bright?"

"Are not both gainers when the heart's distress

"Is so divided that the pain is less?"

"And when the tear has stood in either eye,

"Love's sun shines out, and they are quickly dry."

He ended here—but would he not confess,

How came these feelings on his mind to press?

He would! nor fear'd his weakness to display

80

To men like them; their weakness too had they.

Bright shone the fire, wine sparkled, sordid care

Was banish'd far, at least appear'd not there;

A kind and social spirit each possess'd,

And thus began his tale the friendly guest.

"Near to my father's mansion—but apart,

"I must acknowledge, from my father's heart—

"Dwelt a keen sportsman, in a pleasant seat;

"Nor met the neighbours as should neighbours meet.

"To them revenge appear'd a kind of right,

90

"A lawful pleasure, an avow'd delight;

"Their neighbours too blew up their passion's fire,

"And urged the anger of each rival-squire;

"More still their waspish tempers to inflame,

"A party-spirit, friend of anger, came.

"Oft would my father cry, 'that tory-knave,

"That villain-placeman, would the land enslave."

"Not that his neighbour had indeed a place,

"But would accept one—that was his disgrace;

"Who, in his turn, was sure my father plann'd

100

"To revolutionize his native land.

"He dared the most destructive things advance,

"And even pray'd for liberty to France;

"Had still good hope that Heaven would grant his prayer,
 "That he might see a revolution there.
 "At this the tory-squire was much perplex'd,
 "'Freedom in France!—what will he utter next?
 "'Sooner should I in Paris look to see
 "'An English army sent their guard to be.'
 "My poor mamma, who had her mind subdued 110
 "By whig-control, and hated every feud,
 "Would have her neighbour met with mind serene;
 "But fiercer spirit fired the tory-queen.
 "My parents both had given her high disgust,
 "Which she resenting said, 'Revenge is just ;'
 "And till th' offending parties chose to stoop,
 "She judged it right to keep resentment up ;
 "Could she in friendship with a woman live
 "Who could the insult of a man forgive ?
 "Did not her husband in a crowded room 120
 "Once call her idiot, and the thing was dumb ?
 "The man's attack was brutal to be sure,
 "But she no less an idiot to endure.
 "This lofty dame, with unrelenting soul,
 "Had a fair girl to govern and control ;
 "The dear Maria!—whom, when first I met,—
 "Shame on this weakness ! do I feel it yet ?
 "The parents' anger, you will oft-times see,
 "Prepares the children's minds for amity ;
 "Youth will not enter into such debate, 130
 "'Tis not in them to cherish groundless hate ;
 "Nor can they feel men's quarrels or their cares,
 "Of whig or tory, partridges or hares.
 "Long ere we loved, this gentle girl and I
 "Gave to our parents' discord many a sigh ;
 "It was not ours—and, when the meeting came,
 "It pleased us much to find our thoughts the same ;
 "But grief and trouble in our minds arose
 "From the fierce spirits we could not compose ;
 "And much it vex'd us that the friends so dear 140
 "To us should foes among themselves appear.
 "Such was this maid, the angel of her race,
 "Whom I had loved in any time and place,

THE OLD BACHELOR

"But in a time and place which chance assign'd,
"When it was almost treason to be kind;
"When we had vast impediments in view,
"Then wonder not that love in terror grew
"With double speed—we look'd, and strove to find
"A kindred spirit in the hostile mind;
"But is it hostile? there appears no sign 150
"In those dear looks of warfare—none have mine;
"At length I whisper'd—'Would that war might cease
"Between our houses, and that all was peace!'
"A sweet confusion on her features rose,
"She could not bear to think of having foes,
"When we might all as friends and neighbours live,
"And for that blessing, O! what would she give!—
"Then let us try and our endeavours blend,'
"I said, 'to bring these quarrels to an end.'
"Thus, with one purpose in our hearts, we strove, 160
"And, if no more, increased our secret love:
"Love that, with such impediments in view,
"To meet the growing danger stronger grew;
"And from that time each heart, resolved and sure,
"Grew firm in hope, and patient to endure.
"To those who know this season of delight
"I need not strive their feelings to excite;
"To those who know not the delight or pain,
"The best description would be lent in vain;
"And to the grieving, who will no more find 170
"The bower of bliss, to paint it were unkind.
"I pass it by, to tell that long we tried
"To bring our fathers over to our side;
"Twas bootless on their wives our skill to try,
"For one would not, and one in vain, comply.
"First I began my father's heart to move,
"By boldly saying 'We are born to love;'
"My father answer'd, with an air of ease,
"Well! very well! be loving if you please!
"Except a man insults us or offends, 180
"In my opinion we should all be friends.'
"This gain'd me nothing; little would accrue
"From clearing points so useless though so true;

GEORGE CRABBE

"But with some pains I brought him to confess,
 "That to forgive our wrongs is to redress.

"'It might be so,' he answer'd, yet with doubt
 "That it might not; 'but what is this about?'
 "I dared not speak directly, but I strove
 "To keep my subjects, harmony and love.

"Coolly my father look'd, and much enjoy'd 190
 "The broken eloquence his eye destroy'd;
 "Yet less confused, and more resolved at last,
 "With bolder effort to my point I past;
 "And, fondly speaking of my peerless maid,
 "I call'd her worth and beauty to my aid;
 "'Then make her mine!' I said, and for his favour pray'd. }

"My father's look was one I seldom saw;
 "It gave no pleasure, nor created awe:
 "It was the kind of cool contemptuous smile
 "Of witty persons, overcharged with bile; 200
 "At first he spoke not, nor at last to me—

"'Well now, and what if such a thing could be?
 "'What, if the boy should his addresses pay
 "'To the tall girl, would that old tory say?
 "'I have no hatred to the dog—but, still,
 "'It was some pleasure when I used him ill;
 "'This I must lose if we should brethren be,
 "'Yet may be not, for brethren disagree;
 "'The fool is right—there is no bar in life
 "'Against their marriage—let her be his wife.— 210

"'Well, sir, you hear me!'—Never man complied,
 "And left a beggar so dissatisfied;
 "Though all was granted, yet was grace refused;
 "I felt as one indulged, and yet abused;
 "And yet, although provoked, I was not unamused. }

"In a reply like this appear'd to meet
 "All that encourage hope, and that defeat;
 "Consent, though cool, had been for me enough,
 "But this consent had something of reproof;
 "I had prepared my answer to his rage, 220
 "With his contempt I thought not to engage.
 "I, like a hero, would my castle storm,
 "And meet the giant in his proper form;

THE OLD BACHELOR

"Then, conquering him, would set my princess free :

"This would a trial and a triumph be—

"When lo ! a sneering menial brings the keys,

"And cries in scorn, 'Come, enter, if you please ;

"'You'll find the lady sitting on her bed,

"'And 'tis expected that you woo and wed.'

"Yet not so easy was my conquest found ;

230

"I met with trouble ere with triumph crown'd.

"Triumph, alas !—My father little thought,

- "A king at home, how other minds are wrought ;

"True, his meek neighbour was a gentle squire,

"And had a soul averse from wrath and ire ;

"He answer'd frankly, when to him I went,

"'I give you little, sir, in my consent.'

"He and my mother were to us inclined,

"The powerless party with the peaceful mind ;

"But that meek man was destined to obey

240

"A sovereign lady's unremitted sway,

"Who bore no partial, no divided rule ;

"All were obedient pupils in her school.

"She had religious zeal, both strong and sour,

"That gave an active sternness to her power ;

"But few could please her—she herself was one

"By whom that deed was very seldom done.

"With such a being, so disposed to feed

"Contempt and scorn—how was I to succeed ?

"But love commanded, and I made my prayer

250

"To the stern lady, with an humble air ;

"Said all that lovers hope, all measures tried

"That love suggested, and bow'd down to pride.

"Yes ! I have now the tygress in my eye—

"When I had ceased and waited her reply,

"A pause ensued ; and then she slowly rose,

"With bitter smile predictive of my woes,

"A look she saw was plainly understood—

"'Admire my daughter ! Sir, you're very good.

"'The girl is decent, take her all in all—

260

"'Genteel, we hope—perhaps a thought too tall ;

"'A daughter's portion hers—you'll think her fortune small. []

"'Perhaps her uncles, in a cause so good,

GEORGE CRABBE

"Would do a little for their flesh and blood ;
 "We are not ill allied—and, say we make
 "Her portion decent, whither would you take ?
 "Is there some cottage on your father's ground,
 "Where may a dwelling for the girl be found ?
 "Or a small farm—your mother understands
 "How to make useful such a pair of hands.

270

"But this we drop at present, if you please ;
 "We shall have leisure for such things as these ;
 "They will be proper ere you fix the day
 "For the poor girl to honour and obey ;
 "At present therefore we may put an end
 "To our discourse—Good morrow to you, friend !

"Then, with a solemn curtesy and profound,
 "Her laughing eye she lifted from the ground,
 "And left me lost in thought, and gazing idly round.— []
 "Still we had hope, and, growing bold in time,

280

"I would engage the father in our crime ;
 "But he refused, for, though he wish'd us well,
 "He said, 'he must not make his house a hell ;'—
 "And sure the meaning look that I convey'd
 "Did not inform him that the hell was made.

"Still hope existed that a mother's heart
 "Would in a daughter's feelings take a part ;
 "Nor was it vain—for there is found access
 "To a hard heart, in time of its distress.

"The mother sicken'd, and the daughter sigh'd,
 "And we petition'd till our queen complied ;
 "She thought of dying, and, if power must cease,
 "Better to make, than cause, th' expected peace ;
 "And sure, this kindness mixing with the blood,
 "Its balmy influence caused the body's good ;
 "For as a charm it work'd upon the frame
 "Of the reviving and relenting dame ;
 "For, when recover'd, she no more opposed
 "Her daughter's wishes.—Here contention closed.

290

"Then bliss ensued, so exquisitely sweet,
 "That with it once, once only, we can meet ;
 "For, though we love again, and though once more
 "We feel th' enlivening hope we felt before,

300

THE OLD BACHELOR

"Still the pure freshness of the joy that cast
"Its sweet around us is for ever past.
"O! time to memory precious—ever dear,
"Though ever painful—this eventful year;
"What bliss is now in view! and now what woes appear! [] }
"Sweet hours of expectation!—I was gone
"To the vile town to press our business on;
"To urge its formal instruments—and lo!
"Comes with dire looks a messenger of wo,
"With tidings sad as death!—With all my speed
"I reach'd her home!—but that pure soul was freed—
"She was no more—for ever shut that eye,
"That look'd all soul, as if it could not die;
"It could not see me—O! the strange distress
"Of these new feelings!—misery's excess,
"What can describe it? words will not express. [] }
"When I look back upon that dreadful scene,
"I feel renew'd the anguish that has been,
"And reason trembles—Yes! you bid me cease,
"Nor try to think; but I will think in peace.—
"Unbid and unforbidden, to the room
"I went, a gloomy wretch amid that gloom;
"And there the lovely being on her bed
"Shrouded and cold was laid—Maria dead!
"There was I left—and I have now no thought
"Remains with me, how fear or fancy wrought;
"I know I gazed upon the marble cheek,
"And pray'd the dear departed girl to speak—
"Further I know not, for, till years were fled,
"All was extinguish'd—all with her was dead.
"I had a general terror, dread of all
"That could a thinking, feeling man befall;
"I was desirous from myself to run,
"And something, but I knew not what, to shun.
"There was a blank from this I cannot fill;
"It is a puzzle and a terror still.
"Yet did I feel some intervals of bliss,
"Ev'n with the horrors of a fate like this;
"And dreams of wonderful construction paid
"For waking horror—dear angelic maid!

310

320

330

340

GEORGE CRABBE

“When peace return’d, unfelt for many a year,
“And hope, discarded flatterer, dared t’ appear;
“I heard of my estate, how free from debt,
“And of the comforts life afforded yet;
“Beside that best of comforts in a life
“So sad as mine—a fond and faithful wife.
“My gentle mother, now a widow, made 350
“These strong attempts to guide me or persuade.
“‘Much time is lost,’ she said, ‘but yet my son
“‘May, in the race of life, have much to run;
“‘When I am gone, thy life to thee will seem
“‘Lonely and sad, a melancholy dream;
“‘Get thee a wife—I will not say to love,
“‘But one, a friend in thy distress to prove;
“‘One who will kindly help thee to sustain
“‘Thy spirit’s burden in its hours of pain:
“‘Say, will you marry?’—I in haste replied, 360
“‘And who would be the self-devoted bride?
“‘There is a melancholy power that reigns
“‘Tyrant within me—who would bear his chains,
“‘And hear them clicking every wretched hour,
“‘With will to aid me, but without the power?
“‘But if such one were found with easy mind,
“‘Who would not ask for raptures—I’m resign’d.’
“‘‘Tis quite enough,’ my gentle mother cried;
“‘We leave the raptures, and will find the bride.’
“There was a lady near us, quite discreet, 370
“Whom in our visits ’twas our chance to meet:
“One grave and civil, who had no desire
“That men should praise her beauties or admire;
“She in our walks would sometimes take my arm,
“But had no foolish fluttering or alarm;
“She wish’d no heart to wound, no truth to prove,
“And seem’d, like me, as one estranged from love;
“My mother praised her, and with so much skill,
“She gave a certain bias to my will;
“But calm indeed our courtship; I profess’d 380
“A due regard—My mother did the rest:
“Who soon declared that we should love, and grow
“As fond a couple as the world could show;

THE OLD BACHELOR

"And talk'd of boys and girls with so much glee,

"That I began to wish the thing could be.

"Still, when the day that soon would come was named,

"I felt a cold fit, and was half ashamed ;

"But we too far proceeded to revoke,

"And had been much too serious for a joke ;

"I shook away the fear that man annoys,

390

"And thought a little of the girls and boys.

"A week remain'd—for seven succeeding days

"Nor man nor woman might control my ways ;

"For seven dear nights I might to rest retire

"At my own time, and none the cause require ;

"For seven blest days I might go in and out,

"And none demand, 'Sir, what are you about ?'

"For one whole week I might at will discourse

"On any subject, with a freeman's force.

"Thus while I thought, I utter'd, as men sing

400

"In under-voice, reciting 'With this ring ;'

"That, when the hour should come, I might not dread

"These, or the words that follow'd, 'I thee wed.'

"Such was my state of mind, exulting now

"And then depress'd—I cannot tell you how—

"When a poor lady, whom her friends could send

"On any message, a convenient friend,

"Who had all feelings of her own o'ercome,

"And could pronounce to any man his doom ;

"Whose heart indeed was marble, but whose face

410

"Assumed the look adapted to the case,

"Enter'd my room, commission'd to assuage

"What was foreseen, my sorrow and my rage.

"It seem'd the lady whom I could prefer,

"And could my much-loved freedom lose for her,

"Had bold attempts, but not successful, made,

"The heart of some rich cousin to invade ;

"Who, half resisting, half complying, kept

"A cautious distance, and the business slept.

"This prudent swain his own importance knew,

420

"And swore to part the now affianced two.

"Fill'd with insidious purpose, forth he went,

"Profess'd his love, and woo'd her to consent.

441

GEORGE CRABBE

“‘Ah! were it true!’ she sigh’d; he boldly swore
“His love sincere, and mine was sought no more.

“All this the witch at dreadful length reveal’d,
“And begg’d me calmly to my fate to yield :
“Much pains she took engagements old to state,
“And hoped to hear me curse my cruel fate,
“Threat’ning my luckless life; and thought it strange 430
“In me to bear the unexpected change;
“In my calm feelings she beheld disguise,
“And told of some strange wildness in my eyes.

“But there was nothing in the eye amiss,
“And the heart calmly bore a stroke like this.
“Not so my mother; though of gentle kind,
“She could no mercy for the creature find.

“‘Vile plot!’ she said.—‘But, madam, if they plot,
“And you would have revenge, disturb them not.’—
“‘What can we do, my son?’—‘Consult our ease, 440
“And do just nothing, madam, if you please.’—

“‘What will be said?’—‘We need not that discuss;
“Our friends and neighbours will do that for us.’—
“‘Do you so lightly, son, your loss sustain?’—
“‘Nay, my dear madam, but I count it gain.’—
“‘The world will blame us sure, if we be still.’—

“‘And, if we stir, you may be sure it will.’—
“‘Not to such loss your father had agreed.’—
“‘No, for my father’s had been loss indeed.’

“With gracious smile my mother gave assent, 450
“And let th’ affair slip by with much content.

“Some old dispute, the lover meant should rise,
“Some point of strife they could not compromise,
“Displeased the squire—he from the field withdrew,
“Not quite conceal’d, not fully placed in view;
“But half advancing, half retreating, kept
“At his old distance, and the business slept.

“Six years had past, and forty ere the six,
“When Time began to play his usual tricks :
“The locks once comely in a virgin’s sight, 460
“Locks of pure brown, display’d th’ encroaching white;
“The blood once fervid now to cool began,
“And Time’s strong pressure to subdue the man.

THE OLD BACHELOR

"I rode or walk'd as I was wont before,
"But now the bounding spirit was no more ;
"A moderate pace would now my body heat,
"A walk of moderate length distress my feet.
"I show'd my stranger-guest those hills sublime,
"But said, 'the view is poor, we need not climb.'
"At a friend's mansion I began to dread
470
"The cold neat parlour, and the gay glazed bed ;
"At home I felt a more decided taste,
"And must have all things in my order placed ;
"I ceased to hunt, my horses pleased me less,
"My dinner more ; I learn'd to play at chess ;
"I took my dog and gun, but saw the brute
"Was disappointed that I did not shoot ;
"My morning walks I now could bear to lose,
"And bless'd the shower that gave me not to choose :
"In fact, I felt a languor stealing on ;
480
"The active arm, the agile hand were gone ;
"Small daily actions into habits grew,
"And new dislike to forms and fashion new ;
"I loved my trees in order to dispose,
"I number'd peaches, look'd how stocks arose,
"Told the same story oft—in short, began to prose. }
"My books were changed ; I now prefer'd the truth []
"To the light reading of unsettled youth ;
"Novels grew tedious, but, by choice or chance,
"I still had interest in the wild romance.
490
"There is an age, we know, when tales of love
"Form the sweet pabulum our hearts approve ;
"Then as we read we feel, and are indeed,
"We judge, th' heroic men of whom we read ;
"But in our after life these fancies fail ;
"We cannot be the heroes of the tale ;
"The parts that Cliffords, Mordaunts, Bevilles play
"We cannot—cannot be so smart and gay.
"But all the mighty deeds and matchless powers
500
"Of errant knights we never fancied ours,
"And thus the prowess of each gifted knight
"Must at all times create the same delight ;
"Lovelace a forward youth might hope to seem,

"But Lancelot never—that he could not dream ;
 "Nothing reminds us in the magic page
 "Of old romance, of our declining age.
 "If once our fancy mighty dragons slew,
 "This is no more than fancy now can do ;
 "But when the heroes of a novel come,
 "Conquer'd and conquering, to a drawing-room, 510
 "We no more feel the vanity that sees
 "Within ourselves what we admire in these ;
 "And so we leave the modern tale, to fly
 "From realm to realm with Tristram or Sir Guy.
 "Not quite a Quixote, I could not suppose
 "That queens would call me to subdue their foes ;
 "But, by a voluntary weakness sway'd,
 "When fancy call'd, I willingly obey'd.
 "Such I became, and I believed my heart
 "Might yet be pierced by some peculiar dart 520
 "Of right heroic kind, and I could prove
 "Fond of some peerless nymph who deign'd to love,
 "Some high-soul'd virgin, who had spent her time
 "In studies grave, heroic and sublime ;
 "Who would not like me less that I had spent
 "Years eight and forty, just the age of Kent—
 "But not with Kent's discretion, for I grew
 "Fond of a creature whom my fancy drew :
 "A kind of beings who are never found
 "On middle-earth, but grow on fairy-ground. 530
 "These found I not ; but I had luck to find
 "A mortal woman of this fairy kind ;
 "A thin, tall, upright, serious, slender maid,
 "Who in my own romantic regions stray'd ;
 "From the world's glare to this sweet vale retired,
 "To dwell unseen, unsullied, unadmired ;
 "In all her virgin excellence, above
 "The gaze of crowds, and hopes of vulgar love.
 "We spoke of noble deeds in happier times,
 "Of glorious virtues, of debasing crimes. 540
 "Warm was the season, and the subject too,
 "And therefore warm in our discourse we grew.
 "Love made such haste, that ere a month was flown

THE OLD BACHELOR

"Since first we met, he had us for his own :

"Riches are trifles in an hero's sight,

"And lead to questions low and unpolite ;

"I nothing said of money or of land,

"But bent my knee, and fondly ask'd her hand ;

"And the dear lady, with a grace divine,

"Gave it, and frankly answer'd, 'it is thine.'

550

"Our reading was not to romance confined,

"But still it gave its colour to the mind ;

"Gave to our studies something of its force,

"And made profound and tender our discourse ;

"Our subjects all, and our religion, took

"The grave and solemn spirit of our book ;

"And who had seen us walk, or heard us read,

"Would say, 'these lovers are sublime indeed.'

"I knew not why, but when the day was named

"My ardent wishes felt a little tamed ;

560

"My mother's sickness then awaked my grief,

"And yet, to own the truth, was some relief ;

"It left uncertain that decisive time

"That made my feelings nervous and sublime.

"Still all was kindness, and at morn and eve

"I made a visit, talk'd, and took my leave :

"Kind were the lady's looks, her eyes were bright,

"And swam, I thought, in exquisite delight ;

"A lovely red suffused the virgin cheek,

"And spoke more plainly than the tongue could speak ; 570

"Plainly all seem'd to promise love and joy,

"Nor fear'd we ought that might our bliss destroy.

"Engaged by business, I one morn delay'd

"My usual call on the accomplish'd maid ;

"But soon, that small impediment removed,

"I paid the visit that decisive proved ;

"For the fair lady had, with grieving heart,

"So I believed, retired to sigh apart :

"I saw her friend, and begg'd her to entreat

"My gentle nymph her sighing swain to meet.

580

"The gossip gone—What dæmon, in his spite

"To love and man, could my frail mind excite,

"And lead me curious on, against all sense of right?

}}

445

GEORGE CRABBE

"There met my eye, unclosed, a closet's door—
 "Shame! how could I the secrets there explore?
 "Pride, honour, friendship, love, condemn'd the deed,
 "And yet, in spite of all, I could proceed!
 "I went, I saw—Shall I describe the hoard
 "Of precious worth in seal'd deposits stored
 "Of sparkling hues? Enough—enough is told, 590
 "'Tis not for man such mysteries to unfold.
 "Thus far I dare—Whene'er those orbits swam
 "In that blue liquid that restrain'd their flame,
 "As showers the sunbeams—when the crimson glow
 "Of the red rose o'erspread those cheeks of snow,
 "I saw, but not the cause—'twas not the red
 "Of transient blush that o'er her face was spread;
 "'Twas not the lighter red, that partly streaks
 "The Catherine pear, that brighten'd o'er her cheeks,
 "Nor scarlet blush of shame—but such disclose 600
 "The velvet petals of the Austrian rose,
 "When first unfolded: warm the glowing hue,
 "Nor cold as rouge, but deep'ning on the view.
 "Such were those cheeks—the causes unexplored
 "Were now detected in that secret hoard;
 "And ever to that rich recess would turn
 "My mind, and cause for such effect discern.
 "Such was my fortune, O! my friends, and such
 "The end of lofty hopes that grasp'd too much.
 "This was, indeed, a trying time in life, 610
 "I lost at once a mother and a wife;
 "Yet compensation came in time for these,
 "And what I lost in joy, I gain'd in ease."—
 "But," said the squire, "did thus your courtship cease?
 "Resign'd your mistress her betroth'd in peace?"—
 "Yes; and had sense her feelings to restrain,
 "Nor ask'd me once my conduct to explain;
 "But me she saw those swimming eyes explore,
 "And explanation she required no more.
 "Friend to the last, I left her with regret— 620
 "Nay, leave her not, for we are neighbours yet.
 "These views extinct, I travell'd, not with taste,
 "But so that time ran wickedly to waste;

THE OLD BACHELOR

"I penn'd some notes, and might a book have made,
"But I had no connexion with the trade ;
"Bridges and churches, towers and halls, I saw,
"Maids and madonnas, and could sketch and draw :
"Yes, I had made a book, but that my pride
"In the not making was more gratified.

"There was one feeling upon foreign ground,
"That more distressing than the rest was found :
"That, though with joy I should my country see,
"There none had pleasure in expecting me.

"I now was sixty, but could walk and eat ;
"My food was pleasant, and my slumbers sweet ;
"But what could urge me at a day so late
"To think of women?—my unlucky fate.

"It was not sudden ; I had no alarms,
"But was attack'd when resting on my arms ;
"Like the poor soldier : when the battle raged
"The man escaped, though twice or thrice engaged ;
"But, when it ended, in a quiet spot
"He fell, the victim of a random-shot.

"With my good friend the vicar oft I spent
"The evening hours in quiet, as I meant ;
"He was a friend in whom, although untried
"By ought severe, I found I could confide ;
"A pleasant, sturdy disputant was he,
"Who had a daughter—such the Fates decree,
"To prove how weak is man—poor yielding man, like me. []

"Time after time the maid went out and in,
"Ere love was yet beginning to begin ;
"The first awakening proof, the early doubt,
"Rose from observing she went in and out.
"My friend, though careless, seem'd my mind to explore,
"‘Why do you look so often at the door?’
"I then was cautious, but it did no good,
"For she, at least, my meanings understood ;
"But to the vicar nothing she convey'd
"Of what she thought—she did not feel afraid.

"I must confess, this creature in her mind
"Nor face had beauty that a man would blind ;
"No poet of her matchless charms would write,

630

640

651

660

GEORGE CRABBE

"Yet sober praise they fairly would excite.
 "She was a creature form'd man's heart to make
 "Serenely happy, not to pierce and shake;
 "If she were tried for breaking human hearts,
 "Men would acquit her—she had not the arts.
 "Yet without art, at first without design,
 "She soon became the arbitress of mine; 670
 "Without pretensions—nay, without pretence,
 "But by a native strange intelligence
 "Women possess when they behold a man
 "Whom they can tease, and are assured they can;
 "Then 'tis their soul's delight and pride to reign
 "O'er the fond slave, to give him ease or pain,
 "And stretch and loose by turns the weighty viewless chain. [] }
 "Though much she knew, yet nothing could she prove;
 "I had not yet confess'd the crime of love;
 "But, in an hour when guardian-angels sleep, 680
 "I fail'd the secret of my soul to keep;
 "And then I saw the triumph in those eyes
 "That spoke—'Ay, now you are indeed my prize.'
 "I almost thought I saw compassion, too,
 "For all the cruel things she meant to do.
 "Well I can call to mind the managed air
 "That gave no comfort, that brought no despair,
 "That in a dubious balance held the mind,
 "To each side turning, never much inclined.
 "She spoke with kindness—thought the honour high, 690
 "And knew not how to give a fit reply;
 "She could not, would not, dared not, must not deem
 "Such language proof of ought but my esteem;
 "It made her proud—she never could forget
 "My partial thoughts—she felt her much in debt:
 "She who had never in her life indulged
 "The thought of hearing what I now divulged:
 "I, who had seen so many and so much—
 "It was an honour—she would deem it such.
 "Our different years, indeed, would put an end 700
 "To other views, but still her father's friend
 "To her, she humbly hoped, would his regard extend. [] }
 "Thus, saying nothing, all she meant to say,

THE OLD BACHELOR

"She play'd the part the sex delights to play ;
"Now by some act of kindness giving scope
"To the new workings of excited hope,
"Then by an air of something like disdain,
"But scarcely seen, repelling it again ;
"Then for a season, neither cold nor kind,
"She kept a sort of balance in the mind,
"And, as his pole a dancer on the rope,
"The equal poise on both sides kept me up.

710

"Is it not strange that man can fairly view
"Pursuit like this, and yet his point pursue ;
"While he the folly fairly will confess,
"And even feel the danger of success ?
"But so it is, and nought the Circes care
"How ill their victims with their poison fare,
"When thus they trifle, and with quiet soul
"Mix their ingredients in the maddening bowl :
"Their high regard, the softness of their air,
"The pitying grief that saddens at a prayer,
"Their grave petitions for the peace of mind
"That they determine you shall never find,
"And all their vain amazement that a man
"Like you should love—they wonder how you can.

720

"For months the idler play'd her wicked part,
"Then fairly gave the secret of her heart.
"She hoped'—I now the smiling gipsy view—
"Her father's friend would be her lover's too ;
"Young Henry Gale'—'But why delay so long ?'—
"She could not tell—she fear'd it might be wrong,
"But I was good'—I knew not, I was weak,
"And spoke as love directed me to speak.

730

"When in my arms their boy and girl I take,
"I feel a fondness for the mother's sake ;
"But though the dears some softening thoughts excite,
"I have no wishes for the father's right.

"Now all is quiet, and the mind sustains
"Its proper comforts, its befitting pains ;
"The heart reposes ; it has had its share
"Of love, as much as it could fairly bear ;
"And what is left in life that now demands its care ?

740

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GEORGE CRABBE

“For O ! my friends, if this were all indeed ;
“Could we believe that nothing would succeed ;
“If all were but this daily dose of life,
“Without a care or comfort, child or wife ;
“These walks for health with nothing more in view ;
“This doing nothing, and with labour too ;
“This frequent asking when ’tis time to dine ; 750
“This daily dosing o’er the news and wine ;
“This age’s riddle, when each day appears
“So very long, so very short the years ;
“If this were all—but let me not suppose—
“What then were life ! whose virtues, trials, woes,
“Would sleep th’ eternal sleep, and there the scene would
close. []

“This cannot be—but why has Time a pace
“That seems unequal in our mortal race ?
“Quick is that pace in early life, but slow,
“Tedious and heavy, as we older grow ; 760
“But yet, though slow, the movements are alike,
“And with no force upon the memory strike,
“And therefore tedious as we find them all,
“They leave us nothing we in view recal ;
“But days that we so dull and heavy knew
“Are now as moments passing in review,
“And hence arises ancient men’s report,
“That days are tedious, and yet years are short.”

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK XI.

THE MAID'S STORY.

A Mother's Advice—Trials for a young Lady—Ancient Lovers—The Mother a Wife—Grandmamma—Genteel Economy—Frederick, a young Collegian—Grandmamma dies—Retreat with Biddy—Comforts of the Poor—Return Home—Death of the Husband—Nervous Disorders—Conversion—Frederick a Teacher—Retreat to Sidmouth—Self-examination—The Mother dies—Frederick a Soldier—Retirement with a Friend—Their Happiness how interrupted—Frederick an Actor—Is dismissed and supported—A last Adventure.

TALES OF THE HALL.

BOOK XI.

THE MAID'S STORY.

THREE days remain'd their friend, and then again
The Brothers left themselves to entertain;
When spake the younger—"It would please me well
"To hear thy spinster-friend her story tell;
"And our attention would be nobly paid
"Thus to compare the Bachelor and Maid."

"Frank as she is," replied the squire, "nor one
"Is more disposed to show what she has done
"With time, or time with her: yet all her care
"And every trial she might not declare
"To one a stranger; but to me, her friend,
"She has the story of those trials penn'd;
"These shalt thou hear, for well the maid I know,
"And will her efforts and her conquests show.
"Jacques is abroad, and we alone shall dine,
"And then to give this lady's tale be mine;
"Thou wilt attend to this good spinster's life,
"And grieve and wonder she is not a wife;
"But if we judge by either words or looks,
"Her mode of life, her morals, or her books,
"Her pure devotion, unaffected sense,
"Her placid air, her mild benevolence,
"Her gay good humour, and her manners free,
"She is as happy as a maid can be;
"If as a wife, I know not, and decline
"Question like this, till I can judge of thine."

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THE MAID'S STORY

Then from a secret hoard drew forth the squire
His tale, and said, "Attention I require—
"My verse you may condemn, my theme you must admire." []

I to your kindness speak, let that prevail,
And of my frailty judge as beings frail.— 30

My father, dying, to my mother left
An infant charge, of all things else bereft;
Poor, but experienced in the world, she knew
What others did, and judged what she could do;
Beauty she justly weigh'd, was never blind
To her own interest, and she read mankind:
She view'd my person with approving glance,
And judged the way my fortune to advance;
Taught me betimes that person to improve, 40
And make a lawful merchandize of love;
Bade me my temper in subjection keep,
And not permit my vigilance to sleep;
I was not one, a miss, who might presume
Now to be crazed by mirth, now sunk in gloom;
Nor to be fretful, vapourish, or give way
To spleen and anger, as the wealthy may;
But I must please, and all I felt of pride,
Contempt, and hatred, I must cast aside.

"Have not one friend," my mother cried, "not one; 50
"That bane of our romantic triflers shun;
"Suppose her true, can she afford you aid?
"Suppose her false, your purpose is betray'd;
"And then in dubious points, and matters nice,
"How can you profit by a child's advice?
"While you are writing on from post to post,
"Your hour is over, and a man is lost;
"Girls of their hearts are scribbling, their desires,
"And what the folly of the heart requires,
"Dupes to their dreams—but I the truth impart, 60
"You cannot, child, afford to have a heart.
"Think nothing of it; to yourself be true,
"And keep life's first great business in your view—

GEORGE CRABBE

"Take it, dear Martha, for a useful rule,
 "She who is poor is ugly or a fool ;
 "Or, worse than either, has a bosom fill'd
 "With soft emotions, and with raptures thrill'd.

"Read not too much, nor write in verse or prose,
 "For then you make the dull and foolish foes ;
 "Yet those who do deride not nor condemn,
 "It is not safe to raise up foes in them ;
 "For though they harm you not, as blockheads do,
 "There is some malice in the scribbling crew."

70

Such her advice ; full hard with her had dealt
 The world, and she the usage keenly felt.

"Keep your good name," she said, "and that to keep
 "You must not suffer vigilance to sleep.
 "Some have, perhaps, the name of chaste retain'd,
 "When nought of chastity itself remain'd ;
 "But there is danger—few have means to blind
 "The keen-eyed world, and none to make it kind.

80

"And one thing more—to free yourself from foes
 "Never a secret to your friend disclose ;
 "Secrets with girls, like loaded guns with boys,
 "Are never valued till they make a noise ;
 "To show how trusted, they their power display ;
 "To show how worthy, they the trust betray ;
 "Like pence in children's pockets secrets lie
 "In female bosoms—they must burn or fly.

"Let not your heart be soften'd ; if it be,
 "Let not the man his softening influence see ;
 "For the most fond will sometimes tyrants prove,
 "And wound the bosom where they trace the love.
 "But to your fortune look, on that depend
 "For your life's comfort ; comforts that attend
 "On wealth alone—wealth gone, they have their end."

90

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Such were my mother's cares to mend my lot,
 And such her pupil they succeeded not.

It was conceived the person I had then
 Might lead to serious thoughts some wealthy men,
 Who, having none their purpose to oppose,
 Would soon be won their wishes to disclose.
 My mother thought I was the very child

100

THE MAID'S STORY

By whom the old and amorous are beguiled :
So mildly gay, so ignorantly fair,
And pure, no doubt, as sleeping infants are ;
Then I had lessons how to look and move,
And, I repeat, make merchandize of love.

Thrice it was tried if one so young could bring
Old wary men to buy the binding ring ; 110
And on the taper finger, to whose tip
The fond old swain would press his withering lip,
Place the strong charm :—and one would win my heart
By re-assuming youth—a trying part ;
Girls, he supposed, all knew the young were bold,
And he would show that spirit in the old ;
In boys they loved to hear the rattling tongue,
And he would talk as idly as the young ;
He knew the vices our Lotharios boast,
And he would show of every vice the ghost, 120
The evil's self, without disguise or dress,
Vice in its own pure native ugliness :
Not, as the drunkenness of slaves, to prove
Vice hateful, but that seeing, I might love.
He drove me out, and I was pleased to see
Care of himself : it served as care for me ;
For he would tell me, that he should not spare
Man, horse, or carriage, if I were not there :
Provoked at last, my malice I obey'd,
And smiling said, "Sir, I am not afraid." 130

This check'd his spirit ; but he said, "Could you
"Have charge so rich, you would be careful too."

And he, indeed, so very slowly drove,
That we dismiss'd the over-cautious love.

My next admirer was of equal age,
And wish'd the child's affection to engage,
And keep the fluttering bird a victim in his cage. }
He had no portion of his rival's glee, }
But gravely praised the gravity in me ; }
Religious, moral, both in word and deed, 140
But warmly disputatious in his creed ;
Wild in his younger time, as we were told,
And therefore like a penitent when old.

GEORGE CRABBE

Strange he should wish a lively girl to look
Upon the methods his repentance took !

Then he would say, he was no more a rake
To squander money for his passions' sake ;
Yet, upon proper terms, as man discreet,
He with my mother was disposed to treat,
To whom he told, "the price of beauty fell
"In every market, and but few could sell ;
"That trade in India, once alive and brisk,
"Was over done, and scarcely worth the risk."
Then stoop'd to speak of board, and what for life
A wife would cost—if he should take a wife.

150

Hardly he bargain'd, and so much desired,
That we demurr'd ; and he, displeased, retired.

And now I hoped to rest, nor act again
The paltry part for which I felt disdain,
When a third lover came within our view,
And somewhat differing from the former two.
He had been much abroad, and he had seen
The world's weak side, and read the hearts of men ;
But all, it seem'd, this study could produce,
Was food for spleen, derision, and abuse ;
He levell'd all, as one who had intent
To clear the vile and spot the innocent ;
He praised my sense, and said I ought to be
From girl's restraint and nursery maxims free ;
He praised my mother ; but he judg'd her wrong
To keep us from th' admiring world so long ;
He praised himself ; and then his vices named,
And call'd them follies, and was not ashamed.
He more than hinted that the lessons taught
By priests were all with superstition fraught ;
And I must think them for the crowd design'd,
Not to alarm the free and liberal mind.

160

170

Wisdom with him was virtue. They were wrong
And weak, he said, who went not with the throng ;
Man must his passions order and restrain
In all that gives his fellow-subjects pain ;
But yet of guilt he would in pity speak,
And as he judg'd, the wicked were the weak.

180

THE MAID'S STORY

Such was the lover of a simple maid,
Who seem'd to call his logic to his aid,
And to mean something; I will not pretend
To judge the purpose of my reasoning friend,
Who was dismiss'd, in quiet to complain
That so much labour was bestow'd in vain.

And now my mother seem'd disposed to try
A life of reason and tranquillity.

190

Ere this, her health and spirits were the best,
Hers the day's trifling, and the nightly rest;
But something new was in her mind instill'd;
Unquiet thoughts the matron bosom fill'd;
For five and forty peaceful years she bore
Her placid looks, and dress becoming wore:
She could a compliment with pleasure take,
But no absurd impression could it make.
Now were her nerves disorder'd; she was weak,
And must the help of a physician seek:
A Scotch physician, who had just began
To settle near us, quite a graceful man,
And very clever, with a soft address,
That would his meaning tenderly express.

200

Sick as my mother seem'd, when he inquired
If she was ill, he found her well attired;
She purchased wares so showy and so fine,
The venders all believed th' indulgence mine;—
But I, who thrice was woo'd, had lovers three,
Must now again a very infant be;
While the good lady, twenty years a wife,
Was to decide the colour of his life:
And she decided. She was wont t' appear
To these unequal marriages severe;
Her thoughts of such with energy she told,
And was repulsive, dignified, and cold;
But now, like monarchs weary of a throne,
She would no longer reign—at least alone.

210

She gave her pulse, and, with a manner sweet,
Wish'd him to feel how kindly they could beat;
And 'tis a thing quite wonderful to tell
How soon he understood them, and how well.

220

GEORGE CRABBE

Now, when she married, I from home was sent,
With grandmamma to keep perpetual Lent ;
For she would take me on conditions cheap,
For what we scarcely could a parrot keep :
A trifle added to the daily fare
Would feed a maiden who must learn to spare.

With grandmamma I lived in perfect ease ;
Consent to starve, and I was sure to please.
Full well I knew the painful shifts we made
Expenses all to lessen or evade,
And tradesmen's flinty hearts to soften and persuade.

230

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Poor grandmamma among the gentry dwelt
Of a small town, and all the honour felt ;
Shrinking from all approaches to disgrace
That might be mark'd in so genteel a place ;
Where every daily deed, as soon as done,
Ran through the town as fast as it could run—
At dinners what appear'd—at cards who lost or won.

240

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Our good appearance through the town was known,
Hunger and thirst were matters of our own ;
And you would judge that she in scandal dealt
Who told on what we fed, or how we felt.

We had a little maid, some four feet high,
Who was employ'd our household stores to buy ;
For she would weary every man in trade,
And tease t' assent whom she could not persuade.

Methinks I see her, with her pigmy light,
Precede her mistress in a moonless night ;
From the small lantern throwing through the street
The dimm'd effulgence at her lady's feet ;
What time she went to prove her well-known skill
With rival friends at their beloved quadrille.

250

"And how's your pain?" inquired the gentle maid,
For that was asking if with luck she play'd ;
And this she answer'd as the cards decreed,
"O Biddy! ask not—very bad indeed ;"

Or, in more cheerful tone, from spirit light,
"Why, thank you, Biddy, pretty well to-night."

260

The good old lady often thought me vain,
And of my dress would tenderly complain ;

THE MAID'S STORY

But liked my taste in food of every kind,
As from all grossness, like her own, refined.
Yet when she hinted that on herbs and bread
Girls of my age and spirit should be fed,
Whate'er my age had borne, my flesh and blood,
Spirit and strength, the interdict withstood ;
But, though I might the frugal soul offend 270
Of the good matron, now my only friend,
And though her purse suggested rules so strict,
Her love could not the punishment inflict ;
She sometimes watch'd the morsel with a frown,
And sigh'd to see, but let it still go down.

Our butcher's bill, to me a monstrous sum,
Was such that, summon'd, he forbore to come :
Proud man was he, and when the bill was paid,
He put the money in his bag and play'd,
Jerking it up, and catching it again, 280
And poising in his hand in pure disdain ;
While the good lady, awed by man so proud,
And yet disposed to have her claims allow'd,
Balanced between humility and pride,
Stood a fall'n empress at the butcher's side,
Praising his meat as delicate and nice——
“ Yes, madam, yes ! if people pay the price.”

So lived the lady, and so murmur'd I,
In all the grief of pride and poverty.
Twice in the year there came a note to tell 290
How well mamma, who hoped the child was well ;
It was not then a pleasure to be styled,
By a mamma of such experience, ‘ Child ! ’
But I suppress'd the feelings of my pride,
Or other feelings set them all aside.

There was a youth from college, just the one
I judged mamma would value as a son ;
He was to me good, handsome, learn'd, genteel,
I cannot now what then I thought reveal ;
But, in a word, he was the very youth 300
Who told me what I judged the very truth,
That love like his and charms like mine agreed,
For all description they must both exceed.

GEORGE CRABBE

Yet scarcely can I throw a smile on things
So painful, but that Time his comfort brings,
Or rather throws oblivion on the mind,
For we are more forgetful than resign'd.

We both were young, had heard of love and read,
And could see nothing in the thing to dread,
But like a simple pair our time employ'd

310

In pleasant views to be in time enjoy'd.
When Frederick came, the kind old lady smiled
To see the youth so taken with her child ;
A nice young man, who came with unsoil'd feet
In her best room, and neither drank nor eat.
Alas ! he planted in a vacant breast
The hopes and fears that robb'd it of its rest.

All now appear'd so right, so fair, so just,
We surely might the lovely prospect trust ;
Alas ! poor Frederick and his charmer found
That they were standing on fallacious ground :

320

All that the father of the youth could do
Was done—and now he must himself pursue
Success in life ; and, honest truth to state,
He was not fitted for a candidate.

I, too, had nothing in this world below,
Save what a Scotch physician could bestow,
Who for a pittance took my mother's hand ;
And, if disposed, what had they to command ?

But these were after fears, nor came t' annoy
The tender children in their dreams of joy ;
Who talk'd of glebe and garden, tithe and rent,
And how a fancied income should be spent ;
What friends, what social parties we should see,
And live with what genteel economy ;
In fact, we gave our hearts as children give,
And thought of living as our neighbours live.

330

Now, when assured ourselves that all was well,
'Twas right our friends of these designs to tell ;
For this we parted.—Grandmamma, amazed,
Upon her child with fond compassion gazed ;
Then pious tears appear'd, but not a word
In aid of weeping till she cried, " Good Lord ! "

340

THE MAID'S STORY

She then, with hurried motion, sought the stairs,
And, calling Biddy, bade her come to prayers.

Yet the good lady early in her life
Was call'd to vow the duties of a wife ;
She sought the altar by her friends' advice,
No free-will offering, but a sacrifice ;
But here a forward girl and eager boy
Dared talk of life, and turn their heads with joy ! 350

To my mamma I wrote in just the way
I felt, and said what dreaming lasses say :
How handsome Frederick was, by all confess'd,
How well he look'd, how very well he dress'd ;
With learning much, that would for both provide,
His mother's darling, and his father's pride ;
'And then he loves me more than mind can guess,
'Than heart conceive, or eloquence express.'

No letter came a doubtful mind to ease, 360
And, what was worse, no Frederick came to please ;
To college gone—so thought our little maid—
But not to see me ! I was much afraid ;
I walk'd the garden round, and deeply sigh'd,
When grandmamma grew faint ! and dropt, and died :
A fate so awful and so sudden drove
All else away, and half extinguish'd love.

Strange people came ; they search'd the house around,
And, vulgar wretches ! sold whate'er they found :
The secret hoards that in the drawers were kept, 370
The silver toys that with the tokens slept,
The precious beads, the corals with their bells,
That laid secure, lock'd up in secret cells,
The costly silk, the tabby, the brocade,
The very garment for the wedding made,
Were brought to sale, with many a jest thereon !
"Going—a bridal dress—for——Going!—Gone."
That ring, dear pledge of early love and true,
That to the wedded finger almost grew,
Was sold for six and ten-pence to a Jew ! 380

Great was the fancied worth ; but ah ! how small
The sum thus made, and yet how valued all !
But all that to the shameful service went

GEORGE CRABBE

Just paid the bills, the burial, and the rent ;
 And I and Biddy, poor deserted maids !
 Were turn'd adrift to seek for other aids.

Now left by all the world, as I believed,
 I wonder'd much that I so little grieved ;
 Yet I was frighten'd at the painful view
 Of shiftless want, and saw not what to do. 390
 In times like this the poor have little dread,
 They can but work, and they shall then be fed ;
 And Biddy cheer'd me with such thoughts as this,
 " You'll find the poor have their enjoyments, Miss ! "
 Indeed I saw, for Biddy took me home
 To a forsaken hovel's cold and gloom ;
 And while my tears in plenteous flow were shed,
 With her own hands she placed her proper bed,
 Reserved for need. A fire was quickly made,
 And food, the purchase for the day, display'd ; 400
 She let in air to make the damp's retire,
 Then placed her sad companion at her fire ;
 She then began her wonted peace to feel,
 She [brought] her wool, and sought her favourite wheel ;
 That as she turn'd, she sang with sober glee,
 " Begone, dull Care ! I'll have no more with thee " ;
 Then turn'd to me, and bade me weep no more,
 But try and taste the pleasures of the poor.

When dinner came, on table brown and bare
 Were placed the humblest forms of earthen ware, 410
 With one blue dish, on which our food was placed,
 For appetite provided, not for taste.
 I look'd disgusted, having lately seen
 All so minutely delicate and clean ;
 Yet, as I sate, I found to my surprise
 A vulgar kind of inclination rise,
 And near my humble friend, and nearer, drew,
 Tried the strange food, and was partaker too.

I walk'd at eve, but not where I was seen,
 And thought, with sorrow, what can Frederick mean ? 420
 I must not write, I said, for I am poor ;
 And then I wept till I could weep no more.

Kind-hearted Biddy tried my griefs to heal,

THE MAID'S STORY

"This is a nothing to what others feel;
"Life has a thousand sorrows worse than this,
"A lover lost is not a fortune, Miss!
"One goes, another comes, and which is best
"There is no telling—set your heart at rest."

At night we pray'd—I dare not say a word
Of our devotion, it was so absurd; 430
And very pious upon Biddy's part,
But mine were all effusions of the heart;
While she her angels call'd their peace to shed,
And bless the corners of our little bed.
All was a dream! I said, is this indeed
To be my life? and thus to lodge and feed;
To pay for what I have, and work for what I need? }]
Must I be poor? and Frederick, if we meet,
Would not so much as know me in the street?
Or, as he walk'd with ladies, he would try 440
To be engaged as we were passing by—
And then I wept to think that I should grow
Like them whom he would be ashamed to know.

On the third day, while striving with my fate,
And hearing Biddy all its comforts state,
Talking of all her neighbours, all her schemes,
Her stories, merry jests, and warning dreams,
With tales of mirth and murder—O! the nights
Past, said the maiden, in such dear delights,
And I was thinking, can the time arrive 450
When I shall thus be humbled, and survive?—
Then I beheld a horse and handsome gig,
With the good air, tall form, and comely wig
Of Doctor Mackey—I in fear began
To say, Good heaven, preserve me from the man!
But fears ill reason—heaven to such a mind
Had lent a heart compassionate and kind.

From him I learnt that one had call'd to know
What with my hand my parents could bestow;
And when he learn'd the truth, in high disdain 460
He told my fate, and home return'd again.

"Nay, be not grieved, my lovely girl; but few
"Wed the first love, however kind and true;

GEORGE CRABBE

"Something there comes to break the strongest vow,
"Or mine had been my gentle Mattie now.
"When the good lady died—but let me leave
"All gloomy subjects—'tis not good to grieve."

Thus the kind Scotchman soothed me; he sustain'd
A father's part, and my submission gain'd,
Then my affection; and he often told
My sterner parent that her heart was cold.
He grew in honour—he obtain'd a name—
And now a favourite with the place became;
To me most gentle, he would condescend
To read and reason, be the guide and friend;
He taught me knowledge of the wholesome kind,
And fill'd with many a useful truth my mind.

470

Life's common burden daily lighter grew;
And even Frederick lessen'd in my view.
Cold and repulsive as he once appear'd,
He was by every generous act endear'd;
And, above all, that he with ardour fill'd
My soul for truth—a love by him instill'd;
Till my mamma grew jealous of a maid
To whom an husband such attention paid:
Not grossly jealous, but it gave her pain,
And she observed, "He made her daughter vain;
"And what his help to one who must not look
"To gain her bread by poring on a book?"

480

This was distress; but this, and all beside,
Was lost in grief—my kinder parent died;
When praised and loved, when joy and health he gave,
He sank lamented to an early grave;
Then love and wo the parent and the child,
Lost in one grief, allied and reconciled.

490

Yet soon a will, that left me half his worth,
To the same spirit gave a second birth;
But 'twas a mother's spleen; and she indeed
Was sick, and sad, and had of comfort need.
I watch'd the way her anxious spirit took,
And often found her musing o'er a book;
She changed her dress, her church, her priest, her prayer,
Join'd a new sect, and sought her comforts there.

500

THE MAID'S STORY

Some strange, coarse people came, and were so free
In their addresses, they offended me;
But my mamma threw all her pride away—
More humble she as more assuming they.

"And what," they said, as having power, "are now
"The inward conflicts? do you strive? and how?"

Themselves confessing thoughts so new and wild, 510
I thought them like the visions of a child.

"Could we," they ask, "our best good deeds condemn?"

"And did we long to touch the garment's hem?"

"And was it so with us? for so it was with them." []

A younger few assumed a softer part,
And tried to shake the fortress of my heart;
To this my pliant mother lent her aid,

And wish'd the winning of her erring maid.

I was constrain'd her female friends to hear;

But suffer'd not a bearded convert near; 520

Though more than one attempted, with their whine,

And "Sister! sister! how that heart of thine?"

But this was freedom I for ever check'd:

Mine was a heart no brother could affect.

But, "would I hear the preacher, and receive

"The dropping dew of his discourse at eve?"

"The soft, sweet words?" I gave two precious hours

To hear of gifts and graces, helps and powers;

When a pale youth, who should dismiss the flock,

Gave to my bosom an electric shock. 530

While in that act, he look'd upon my face

As one in that all-equalizing place;

Nor, though he sought me, would he lay aside

Their cold, dead freedom, or their dull, sad pride.

Of his conversion he with triumph spoke,

Before he orders from a bishop took;

Then how his father's anger he had braved,

And, safe himself, his erring neighbours saved.

Me he rejoiced a sister to behold

Among the members of his favourite fold; 540

He had not sought me; the availing call

Demanded all his love, and had it all;

But, now thus met, it must be heaven's design.—

GEORGE CRABBE

Indeed! I thought; it never shall be mine!—
 Yes, we must wed. He was not rich: and I
 Had of the earthly good a mean supply;
 But it sufficed. Of his conversion then
 He told, and labours in converting men;
 For he was chosen all their bands among—
 Another Daniel! honour'd, though so young.

550

He call'd me sister; show'd me that he knew
 What I possess'd; and told what it would do;
 My looks, I judge, express'd my full disdain;
 But it was given to the man in vain: }
 They preach till they are proud, and pride disturbs the brain. []

Is this the youth once timid, mild, polite?
 How odious now, and sick'ning to the sight!
 Proud that he sees, and yet so truly blind,
 With all this blight and mildew on the mind!

Amazed, the solemn creature heard me vow
 That I was not disposed to take him now.

560

"Then, art thou changed, fair maiden? changed thy heart?"
 I answered, "No; but I perceive thou art."

Still was my mother sad, her nerves relax'd,
 And our small income for advice was tax'd;
 When I, who long'd for change and freedom, cried,
 'Let sea and Sidmouth's balmy air be tried.'
 And so they were, and every neighbouring scene,
 That make the bosom, like the clime, serene;
 Yet were her teachers loth to yield assent;
 And not without the warning voice we went;
 And there was secret counsel all unknown
 To me—but I had counsel of my own.

570

And now there pass'd a portion of my time
 In ease delicious, and in joy sublime—
 With friends endear'd by kindness—with delight
 In all that could the feeling mind excite,
 Or please, excited; walks in every place
 Where we could pleasure find and beauty trace,
 Or views at night, where on the rocky steep
 Shines the full moon, or glitters on the deep.

580

Yes, they were happy days; but they are fled!
 All now are parted—part are with the dead!

THE MAID'S STORY

Still it is pleasure, though 'tis mix'd with pain,
To think of joys that cannot live again—
Here cannot live ; but they excite desire
Of purer kind, and heavenly thoughts inspire !

And now my mother, weaken'd in her mind,
Her will, subdued before, to me resign'd.
Wean'd from her late directors, by degrees
She sank resign'd, and only sought for ease.
In a small town upon the coast we fix'd,
Nor in amusement with associates mix'd.
My years—but other mode will I pursue,
And count my time by what I sought to do.

590

And was that mind at ease ? could I avow
That no once leading thoughts engaged me now ?
Was I convinced th' enthusiastic man
Had ruin'd what the loving boy began ?

I answer doubting—I could still detect
Feelings too soft—yet him I could reject :
Feelings that came when I had least employ—
When common pleasures I could least enjoy—
When I was pacing lonely in the rays
Of a full moon, in lonely walks and ways—
When I was sighing o'er a tale's distress,
And paid attention to my Bible less.

600

These found, I sought my remedies for these ;
I suffer'd common things my mind to please,
And common pleasures ; seldom walk'd alone,
Nor when the moon upon the waters shone ;
But then my candles lit, my window closed,
My needle took, and with my neighbours prosed ;
And in one year—nay, ere the end of one,
My labour ended, and my love was done.
My heart at rest, I boldly look'd within,
And dared to ask it of its secret sin ;

610

Alas ! with pride it answer'd, "Look around,
"And tell me where a better heart is found."
And then I traced my virtues ; O ! how few,
In fact, they were, and yet how vain I grew ;
Thought of my kindness, condescension, ease,
My will, my wishes, nay, my power to please ;

620

GEORGE CRABBE

I judged me prudent, rational, discreet,
And void of folly, falsehood and deceit;
I read, not lightly, as I some had known,
But made an author's meaning all my own;
In short, what lady could a poet choose
As a superior subject for his muse?

So said my heart; and Conscience straight replied—

"I say the matter is not fairly tried:

"I am offended, hurt, dissatisfied.

"First of the Christian graces, let me see

"What thy pretensions to humility?

"Art thou prepared for trial? Wilt thou say

"'I am this being,' and for judgment pray?

"And, with the gallant Frenchman, wilt thou cry,

"When to thy judge presented, 'thus am I—

"'Thus was I formed—these talents I possess'd—

"'So I employed them—and thou know'st the rest?'"

Thus Conscience; and she then a picture drew,

And bade me think and tremble at the view.

One I beheld—a wife, a mother—go

To gloomy scenes of wickedness and wo;

She sought her way through all things vile and base,

And made a prison a religious place;

Fighting her way—the way that angels fight

With powers of darkness—to let in the light.

Tell me, my heart, hast thou such victory won

As this, a sinner of thy sex, has done,

And calls herself a sinner? What art thou?

And where thy praise and exaltation now?

Yet is she tender, delicate, and nice,

And shrinks from all depravity and vice;

Shrinks from the ruffian gaze, the savage gloom,

That reign where guilt and misery find an home—

Guilt chain'd, and misery purchased; and with them

All we abhor, abominate, condemn—

The look of scorn, the scowl, th' insulting leer

Of shame, all fix'd on her who ventures here.

Yet all she braved! she kept her stedfast eye

On the dear cause, and brush'd the baseness by.

So would a mother press her darling child

631 }
[]

640

650

660

THE MAID'S STORY

Close to her breast, with tainted rags defiled.

But thou hast talents truly ! say, the ten :
Come, let us look at their improvement then.
What hast thou done to aid thy suffering kind,
To help the sick, the deaf, the lame, the blind ?
Hast thou not spent thy intellectual force
On books abstruse, in critical discourse ?
Wasting in useless energy thy days,
And idly listening to their common praise,
Who can a kind of transient fame dispense,
And say—"a woman of exceeding sense."

670

Thus tried, and failing, the suggestions fled,
And a corrected spirit reign'd instead.

My mother yet was living ; but the flame
Of life now flash'd, and fainter then became ;
I made it pleasant, and was pleased to see
A parent looking as a child to me.

680

And now our humble place grew wond'rous gay ;
Came gallant persons in their red array :
All strangers welcome there, extremely welcome they.

}
[]

When in the church I saw inquiring eyes
Fix'd on my face with pleasure and surprise ;
And soon a knocking at my door was heard ;
And soon the lover of my youth appear'd—
Frederick, in all his glory, glad to meet,
And say, "his happiness was now complete."

He told his flight from superstitious zeal ;
But first what torments he was doom'd to feel :
The tender tears he saw from women fall—
The strong persuasions of the brethren all—
The threats of crazed enthusiasts, bound to keep
The struggling mind, and awe the straying sheep—
From these, their love, their curses, and their creed,
Was I by reason and exertion freed.

690

Then, like a man who often had been told
And was convinced success attends the bold,
His former purpose he renew'd, and swore
He never loved me half so well before :
Before he felt a something to divide
The heart, that now had not a love beside.

700

469

GEORGE CRABBE

In earlier times had I myself amused,
And first my swain perplex'd, and then refused—
Cure for conceit; but now in purpose grave,
Strong and decisive the reply I gave.
Still he would come, and talk as idlers do,
Both of his old associates and his new;
Those who their dreams and reveries receive
For facts, and those who would not facts believe.

710

He now conceived that truth was hidden, placed
He knew not where, she never could be traced;
But that in every place, the world around,
Might some resemblance of the nymph be found.
Yet wise men knew these shadows to be vain,
Such as our true philosophers disdain—

"They laugh to see what vulgar minds pursue—

"Truth, as a mistress, never in their view—

"But there the shadow flies, and that, they cry, is true." []

721

Thus, at the college and the meeting train'd,

My lover seem'd his acmé to have gain'd;

With some compassion I essay'd a cure:

"If truth be hidden, why art thou so sure?"

This he mistook for tenderness, and cried,

"If sure of thee, I care not what beside!"

Compell'd to silence, I, in pure disdain,

Withdrew from one so insolent and vain;

He then retired; and, I was kindly told,

In pure compassion grew estranged and cold.

730

My mother died; but, in my grief, drew near

A bosom friend, who dried the useless tear;

We lived together: we combined our shares

Of the world's good, and learn'd to brave its cares.

We were the ladies of the place, and found

Protection and respect the country round;

We gave, and largely, for we wish'd to live

In good repute—for this 'tis good to give;

Our annual present to the priest convey'd

Was kindly taken—we in comfort pray'd.

740

There none molested in the crimson pew

The worthy ladies, whom the vicar knew;

And we began to think that life might be—

THE MAID'S STORY

Not happy all, but innocently free.

My friend in early life was bound to one
Of gentle kindred, but a younger son.
He fortune's smile with perseverance woo'd,
And wealth beneath the burning sun pursued.
There, urged by love and youthful hope, he went,
Loth; but 'twas all his fortune could present. 750
From hence he wrote; and, with a lover's fears,
And gloomy fondness, talk'd of future years;
To her devoted, his Priscilla found
His faithful heart still suffering with its wound,
That would not heal. A second time she heard;
And then no more; nor lover since appear'd.
Year after year the country's fleet arrived,
Confirm'd her fear, and yet her love survived;
It still was living; yet her hope was dead,
And youthful dreams, nay, youth itself, was fled; 760
And he was lost: so urged her friends, so she
At length believed, and thus retired with me.
She would a dedicated vestal prove,
And give her virgin vows to heaven and love;
She dwelt with fond regret on pleasures past,
With ardent hope on those that ever last;
Pious and tender, every day she view'd
With solemn joy our perfect solitude;
Her reading, that which most delighted her,
That soothed the passions, yet would gently stir; 770
The tender, softening, melancholy strain,
That caused not pleasure, but that vanquish'd pain,
In tears she read, and wept, and long'd to read again. []
But other worlds were her supreme delight,
And there, it seem'd, she long'd to take her flight;
Yet patient, pensive, arm'd by thoughts sublime,
She watch'd the tardy steps of lingering time.

My friend, with face that most would handsome call,
Possess'd the charm that wins the heart of all;
And, thrice entreated by a lover's prayer, 780
She thrice refused him with determined air.

"No! had the world one monarch, and was he
"All that the heart could wish its lord to be—

GEORGE CRABBE

"Lovely and loving, generous, brave, and true—
"Vain were his hopes to waken hers anew!"
For she was wedded to ideal views,
And fancy's prospects, that she would not lose,
Would not forego to be a mortal's wife,
And wed the poor realities of life.

There was a day, ere yet the autumn closed, 790
When, ere her wintry wars, the earth reposed;
When from the yellow weed the feathery crown,
Light as the curling smoke, fell slowly down;
When the wing'd insect settled in our sight,
And waited wind to recommence her flight;
When the wide river was a silver sheet,
And on the ocean slept th' unanchor'd fleet;
When from our garden, as we look'd above,
There was no cloud, and nothing seem'd to move;
Then was my friend in ecstasies—she cried, 800
"There is, I feel there is, a world beside!"
"Martha, dear Martha! we shall hear not then
"Of hearts distress'd by good or evil men,
"But all will constant, tender, faithful be—
"So had I been, and so had one with me;
"But in this world the fondest and the best
"Are the most tried, most troubled, and distress'd:
"This is the place for trial, here we prove,
"And there enjoy, the faithfulness of love.

"Nay, were he here in all the pride of youth, 810
"With honour, valour, tenderness, and truth,
"Entirely mine, yet what could I secure,
"Or who one day of comfort could insure?"
"No! all is closed on earth, and there is now
"Nothing to break th' indissoluble vow;
"But in that world will be th' abiding bliss,
"That pays for every tear and sigh in this."

Such her discourse, and more refined it grew,
Till she had all her glorious dream in view;
And she would further in that dream proceed 820
Than I dare go, who doubtfully agreed.
Smiling I ask'd, again to draw the soul
From flight so high, and fancy to control,

THE MAID'S STORY

"If this be truth, the lover's happier way
"Is distant still to keep the purposed day ;
"The real bliss would mar the fancied joy,
"And marriage all the dream of love destroy."

She softly smiled, and, as we gravely talk'd,
We saw a man who up the gravel walk'd—
Not quite erect, nor quite by age depress'd ;
A travell'd man, and as a merchant dress'd.
Large chain of gold upon his watch he wore,
Small golden buckles on his feet he bore ;
A head of gold his costly cane display'd,
And all about him love of gold betray'd.

830

This comely man moved onward, and a pair
Of comely maidens met with serious air ;
Till one exclaim'd, and wildly look'd around,
"O heav'n, 'tis Paul !" and dropt upon the ground ;
But she recover'd soon, and you must guess
What then ensued, and how much happiness.
They parted lovers, both distress'd to part ;
They met as neighbours, heal'd, and whole of heart.
She in his absence look'd to heaven for bliss ;
He was contented with a world like this :
And she prepared in some new state to meet
The man now seeking for some snug retreat.
He kindly told her he was firm and true,
Nor doubted her, and bade her then adieu !

840

"What shall I do?" the sighing maid began,
"How lost the lover! O, how gross the man!"

850

For the plain dealer had his wish declared,
Nor she, devoted victim! could be spared.
He spoke as one decided; she as one
Who fear'd the love, and would the lover shun.

"O Martha, sister of my soul! how dies
"Each lovely view! for can I truth disguise,
"That this is he? No! nothing shall persuade :
"This is a man the naughty world has made,
"An eating, drinking, buying, bargaining man—
"And can I love him? No! I never can.
"What once he was, what fancy gave beside,
"Full well I know, my love was then my pride ;

860

GEORGE CRABBE

"What time has done, what trade and travel wrought,
"You see! and yet your sorrowing friend is sought;
"But can I take him?"—"Take him not," I cried,
"If so averse—but why so soon decide?"

Meantime a daily guest the man appear'd,
Set all his sail, and for his purpose steer'd;
Loud and familiar, loving, fierce and free, 870
He overpower'd her soft timidity:
Who, weak and vain, and grateful to behold
The man was hers, and hers would be the gold—
Thus sundry motives, more than I can name,
Leagued on his part, and she a wife became.

A home was offer'd, but I knew too well
What comfort was with married friends to dwell;
I was resign'd, and had I felt distress,
Again a lover offer'd some redress. 880
Behold, a hero of the buskin hears
My loss, and with consoling love appears.
Frederick was now a hero on the stage,
In all its glories, rhapsody, and rage;
Again himself he offer'd, offer'd all
That his an hero of the kind can call:
He for my sake would hope of fame resign,
And leave the applause of all the world for mine.
Hard fate was Frederick's never to succeed,
Yet ever try—but so it was decreed.
His mind was weaken'd; he would laugh and weep, 890
And swore profusely I had murder'd sleep,
Had quite unmann'd him, cleft his heart in twain,
And he should never be himself again.

He *was* himself: weak, nervous, kind, and poor,
Ill dress'd and idle, he besieged my door;
Borrow'd,—or, worse; made verses on my charms,
And did his best to fill me with alarms.
I had some pity, and I sought the price
Of my repose—my hero was not nice:
There was a loan, and promise I should be 900 }
From all the efforts of his fondness free, }
From hunger's future claims, or those of vanity. }
"Yet," said he, bowing, "do to study take!"

THE MAID'S STORY

"O! what a Desdemona wouldst thou make!"
Thus was my lover lost; yet even now
He claims one thought, and this we will allow.

His father lived to an extreme old age,
But never kind!—his son had left the stage,
And gain'd some office, but an humble place,
And that he lost! Want sharpen'd his disgrace, 910
Urged him to seek his father—but too late:
His jealous brothers watch'd and barr'd the gate.

The old man died; but there is one who pays
A moderate pension for his latter days;
Who, though assured inquiries will offend,
Is ever asking for this unknown friend:
Some partial lady, whom he hopes to find
As to his wants so to his wishes kind.

"Be still," a cool adviser sometimes writes—
"Nay, but," says he, "the gentle maid invites— 920
"Do, let me know the young! the soft! the fair!"
"Old man," 'tis answer'd, "take thyself to prayer!"
"Be clean, be sober, to thy priest apply,
"And—dead to all around thee—learn to die!"

Now had I rest from life's strong hopes and fears,
And no disturbance mark'd the flying years;
So on in quiet might those years have past,
But for a light adventure, and a last.

A handsome boy, from school-day bondage free,
Came with mamma to gaze upon the sea; 930
With soft blue eye he look'd upon the waves,
And talk'd of treacherous rocks, and seamen's graves.
There was much sweetness in his boyish smile,
And signs of feelings frank, that knew not guile.

The partial mother, of her darling proud,
Besought my friendship, and her own avow'd;
She praised her Rupert's person, spirit, ease,
How fond of study, yet how form'd to please.
In our discourse he often bore a part,
And talk'd, heaven bless him, of his feeling heart; 940
He spoke of pleasures souls like his enjoy,
And hated Lovelace like a virtuous boy;
He felt for Clementina's holy strife,

GEORGE CRABBE

And was Sir Charles as large and true as life ;
 For Virtue's heroines was his soul distress'd ;
 True love and guileless honour fill'd his breast,
 When, as the subjects drew the frequent sigh,
 The tear stood trembling in his large blue eye,
 And softly he exclaim'd, "Sweet, sweetest sympathy !" } []
 When thus I heard the handsome stripling speak, 950

I smiled assent, and thought to pat his cheek ;
 But when I saw the feelings blushing there,
 Signs of emotions strong, they said—forebear !

The youth would speak of his intent to live
 On that estate which heaven was pleased to give—
 There with the partner of his joys to dwell,
 And nurse the virtues that he loved so well ;
 The humble good of happy swains to share,
 And from the cottage drive distress and care ;
 To the dear infants make some pleasures known, 960
 And teach, he gravely said, the virtues to his own.

He loved to read in verse, and verse-like prose,
 The softest tales of love-inflicted woes ;
 When, looking fondly, he would smile and cry,
 "Is there not bliss in sensibility ?"

We walk'd together, and it seem'd not harm
 In linking thought with thought, and arm with arm ;
 Till the dear boy would talk too much of bliss,
 And indistinctly murmur—"such as this."

When no maternal wish her heart beguiled, 970
 The lady call'd her son "her darling child ;"
 When with some nearer view her speech began,
 She changed her phrase, and said, "the good young man !"
 And lost, when hinting of some future bride,
 The woman's prudence in the mother's pride.

Still decent fear and conscious folly strove
 With fond presumption and aspiring love ;
 But now too plain to me the strife appear'd,
 And what he sought I knew, and what he fear'd :
 The trembling hand and frequent sigh disclosed 980
 The wish that prudence, care, and time opposed.

Was I not pleased, will you demand ?—Amused
 By boyish love, that woman's pride refused ?

THE MAID'S STORY

This I acknowledge, and from day to day
Resolved no longer at such game to play;
Yet I forbore, though to my purpose true,
And firmly fix'd to bid the youth adieu.

There was a moonlight eve, serenely cool,
When the vast ocean seem'd a mighty pool;
Save the small rippling waves that gently beat, 990
We scarcely heard them falling, at our feet.

His mother absent, absent every sound
And every sight that could the youth confound;
The arm, fast lock'd in mine, his fear betray'd,
And, when he spoke not, his designs convey'd;
He oft-times gasp'd for breath, he tried to speak,
And studying words, at last had words to seek.

Silent the boy, by silence more betray'd,
And fearing lest he should appear afraid,
He knelt abruptly, and his speech began— 1000
“Pity the pangs of an unhappy man.”

“Be sure,” I answer'd, “and relieve them too—
“But why that posture? What the woes to you?
“To feel for others' sorrows is humane,
“But too much feeling is our virtue's bane.

“Come, my dear Rupert! now your tale disclose,
“That I may know the sufferer and his woes.
“Know, there is pain that wilful man endures,
“That our reproof and not our pity cures;
“For though for such assumed distress we grieve, 1010
“Since they themselves as well as us deceive,
“Yet we assist not.”—The unhappy youth,
Unhappy then, beheld not all the truth.

“O! what is this?” exclaim'd the dubious boy;
“Words that confuse the being they destroy?
“So have I read the gods to madness drive
“The man condemn'd with adverse fate to strive.
“O! make thy victim, though by misery, sure,
“And let me know the pangs I must endure;
“For, like the Grecian warrior, I can pray, 1020
“Falling, to perish in the face of day.”

“Pretty, my Rupert; and it proves the use
“Of all that learning which the schools produce.

GEORGE CRABBE

"But come, your arm—no trembling, but attend
 "To sober truth, and a maternal friend.

"You ask for pity?"—"O! indeed I do."

"Well then, you have it, and assistance too:

"Suppose us married!"—"O! the heavenly thought!"

"Nay—nay, my friend, be you by wisdom taught;

"For wisdom tells you, love would soon subside, 1030

"Fall, and make room for penitence and pride;

"Then would you meet the public eye, and blame

"Your private taste, and be o'erwhelm'd with shame:

"How must it then your bosom's peace destroy

"To hear it said, 'The mother and her boy!'

"And then to show the sneering world it lies,

"You would assume the man, and tyrannize;

"Ev'n Time, Care's general soother, would augment

"Your self-reproaching, growing discontent.

"Add twenty years to my precarious life, 1040

"And lo! your aged, feeble, wailing wife;

"Displeased, displeasing, discontented, blamed;

"Both, and with cause, ashaming and ashamed.

"When I shall bend beneath a press of time,

"Thou wilt be all erect in manhood's prime;

"Then wilt thou fly to younger minds t' assuage

"Thy bosom's pain, and I in jealous age

"Shall move contempt, if still; if active, rage; }

"And, though in anguish all my days are past, []

"Yet far beyond thy wishes they may last— 1050

"May last till thou, thy better prospects fled,

"Shall have no comfort when thy wife is dead.

"Then thou in turn, though none will call thee old,

"[Wilt] feel thy spirit fled, thy bosom cold;

"No strong or eager wish to make the will,

"Life will appear to stagnate and be still,

"As now with me it slumbers: O! rejoice

"That I attend not to that pleading voice;

"So will new hopes this troubled dream succeed,

"And one will gladly hear my Rupert plead." 1060

Ask you, while thus I could the youth deny

Was I unmoved?—Inexorable I,

Fix'd and determined; thrice he made his prayer,

THE MAID'S STORY

With looks of sadness first, and then despair ;
Thrice doom'd to bear refusal, not exempt,
At the last effort, from a slight contempt.

"Did his distress, his pains, your joy excite ?—"

No ; but I fear'd his perseverance might.

Was there no danger in the moon's soft rays,
To hear the handsome stripling's earnest praise ?
Was there no fear that while my words reproved
The eager youth, I might myself be moved ?

1070

Not for his sake alone I cried "persist
No more," and with a frown the cause dismiss'd.

Seek you th' event ?—I scarcely need reply :
Love, unreturn'd, will languish, pine, and die.

We lived awhile in friendship ; and with joy
I saw depart in peace the amorous boy.

We met some ten years after, and he then
Was married, and as cool as married men ;
He talk'd of war and taxes, trade and farms,
And thought no more of me, or of my charms.

1080

We spoke ; and when, alluding to the past,
Something of meaning in my look I cast,
He, who could never thought or wish disguise,
Look'd in my face with trouble and surprise.

To kill reserve, I seized his arm, and cried,
"Know me, my lord !" when laughing, he replied,
Wonder'd again, and look'd upon my face,
And seem'd unwilling marks of time to trace ;
But soon I brought him fairly to confess,
That boys in love judge ill of happiness.

1090

Love had his day—to graver subjects led,
My will is govern'd, and my mind is fed ;
And to more vacant bosoms I resign
The hopes and fears that once affected mine.

ERRATA.

VOL. II.

[The lines cited from the several poems are those of the poems; those cited from title-pages containing mottoes are the lines of the pages.]

PAGE 6 l. 21 for *or* read *but*. p. 13 l. 5 for *With* read *In*. ib. l. 13 for 2 read 1. ib. l. 17 for *Act II. Scene 7* read *Act IV. Scene 2*. p. 27 l. 5 several lines omitted after *and such*. ib. l. 9 for 4 read 3. ib. l. 12 for *o'er* read *in*. ib. l. 14 for *Egean* read *Ægean*. ib. l. 15 for *Emilia* read *Æmilia*. ib. l. 16 for 5 read 1. ib. l. 18 for *she bad* read *he bade*. ib. l. 21 for *th' insolent* read *the insolent*. ib. l. 24 for *fate* read *state*. ib. l. 25 for *you* read *ye*. p. 28 l. 13 for *Pain* read *Pains*. p. 41 l. 3 for *then* read *there...* ib. l. 11 for 3 read 1. p. 47 l. 204 for *Chesterfield* read '*Chesterfield*.' p. 56 l. 4 for *ever true and humble* read *a true and humble wife*. ib. l. 10 for *The fatal time* read *The leisure and the fearful time*. ib. l. 11 for *all ceremonies and* read *the ceremonious*. ib. l. 18 for *impiety, thou impious* read *impiety and impious*. ib. l. 20 for 2 read 1. p. 67 l. 4 for *peculiar* read *particular*. ib. l. 5 for *she* read *he*. ib. l. 6 for *her* read *his*. ib. l. 7 for *her* read *his*. ib. l. 16 for *Tempest* read *The Tempest*. p. 69 l. 50 for *Marcus* read '*Marcus*.' p. 76 l. 344 for *divine!* read '*divine!*'. p. 87 l. 3 for *make a curtsy* read *make curtsy*. ib. l. 4 for *but for* read *but yet for*. ib. l. 11 for *amble, you nick-name* read *you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name*. ib. l. 15 for *Am I condemn'd* read *Stand I condemn'd*. ib. l. 16 for *II.* read *III.* p. 92 l. 166 '*Chaste, sober, solemn*' and '*devout*.' Not in inverted commas. p. 93 l. 197 for *what woman* read *that woman*. p. 95 l. 265 for *than* read *then*. p. 101 l. 4 for *Or* read *Could*. ib. a line omitted after ll. 6, 7 and 8 respectively. p. 103 l. 46 for *Lea* read *lea*. p. 113 l. 8 for *As You Like It* read *Much Ado about Nothing, Act II. Scene 1*. ib. l. 11 *Act IV. Scene 3* omitted. ib. l. 14 for *hence* read *home*. ib. ll. 16—20 '*Be this Sweet Helen's Knell*' is printed as immediately preceding the rest of these lines, instead of following them 28 lines later. For *He left a wife* read *He lost a wife*. In the Shakspearean text these words form the latter part of a line, and are followed by a line and a half here omitted. p. 116 l. 75 for *beauty bless'd* read *beauty-bless'd*. p. 124 after line 3 a line omitted. ib. l. 9 for *sometimes* read *something*. ib. l. 13 for *Measure for Measure, Act II. Scene 4* read *Much Ado about Nothing, Act III. Scene 1*. p. 134 l. 3 for *heavens* read *heaven*. p. 145 l. 11 for *with purged* read *in purged*. p. 159 l. 13 for *upon* read *of*. ib. l. 16 for *pitiable* read *pitiful and*. ib. l. 17 for *But thou art* read *Thou stern*. p. 185 l. 13 for *for it* read *for 't*. p. 194 l. 311 for *dosed* read *dosed*. p. 211 l. 8 for *in thee* read *of thee*. ib. l. 12 for *but tyrannous* read *but it is tyrannous*. p. 228

ERRATA

ll. 3 and 6 *She* and *Her* are substituted for *He* and *His* in the original passage.
ib. l. 9 for *there is* read *there's*. p. 242 l. 4 for *Taming the Shrew* read
Taming of the Shrew. *ib.* l. 7 for *Act V. Scene 2* read *Act II. Scene 1*.
p. 249 l. 233 for *has* read *had*. p. 251 l. 6 for *with my troll-my-dames* read
with troll-my-dames. *ib.* l. 7 for *Scene 2* read *Scene 3.* *ib.* l. 9 for
holding read *hiding.* p. 253 l. 31 for *of as* read *as of.* p. 259 l. 272
for *seems* read *seemed.* p. 261 l. 372 for *I boy* read *I a boy.* p. 264 l. 6
for *practice may* read *practices.* *ib.* l. 8 for *with hinds* read *with his hinds.*
ib. l. 12 for *being what* read *being the thing.* p. 276 l. 10 for *He has* read
He is. p. 308 l. 200 for *know* read *knew.* p. 341 l. 298 for *hear*
read *heard.* p. 351 l. 184 for *look'd* read *look.* p. 381 l. 344 for
bounded read *bonded.* p. 391 l. 738 for *comfort* read *comforts.* p. 397
l. 91 for *it* read *its.* p. 409 ll. 556—8 three inverted commas, instead of
four, prefixed to each line, and no single inverted comma at the end of l. 558.
p. 413 l. 716 for *parent's* read *parents'.* p. 415 l. 807 for *peasant's* read
peasants'. p. 423 l. 116 for *Has* read *Had.* p. 449 l. 731 no inverted
comma before and after the words *But why delay so long?* p. 461
ll. 358—9 no inverted commas prefixed to these lines, and no inverted comma
at the end of l. 359. p. 462 l. 404 for *bought* read *brought.* p. 466
l. 567 no inverted comma at beginning or end of this line. p. 468 l. 636
no third inverted comma before and after the words *I am this being.*
ib. ll. 638—40 no third inverted comma before the word *thus* in l. 638 or
before ll. 639 and 640 or at the end of l. 640. p. 469 ll. 692—7 two
inverted commas before each of these lines and at the close of l. 697.
p. 470 ll. 714—7 two inverted commas before each of these lines and at the end
of l. 717. p. 478 l. 1054 for *will* read *wilt.*

VARIANTS.

TALES. Variants in edition of 1812 (first edition), and 'Original MS.' readings given as footnotes in *Life and Poems* (1834). These latter are distinguished as 'O.M.'

Preface: p. 5, l. 1. present Volume. p. 10, l. 22. Ahitophel.
l. 23. Ogg. pp. 10—11. *instead of* l. 30—l. 5:

It has been asked, if Pope was a poet? No one, I conceive, will accuse me of vanity in bringing forward this query, or suppose me capable of comparing myself with a man so eminent: but persons very unlike in other respects may, in one particular, admit of comparison, or rather the same question may be applied to both. Now, who will complain that a definition of poetry, which excludes a great part of the writings of Pope, will shut out him? I do not lightly take up the idea, but I conceive that by that kind of definition, one half of our most agreeable English versification (most generally held, by general readers, to be agreeable and good) will be excluded, and an equal quantity, at least of very moderate, or, to say truly, of very wretched composition, will be taken in. (O.M.)

Tale 1. *The edition of 1834 contains the following note to the Quotations:* These mottoes are many, because there is a reference in them not only to the characters, but frequently to the incidents also; and they are all taken from Shakspeare, because I could more readily find them in his scenes, than in the works of any other poet to whom I could have recourse. (O.M.)

l. 310. tyger. l. 371. skulks.

Tale 2. Second Quotation. Hath written. Third Quotation. fire and flood. *instead of* ll. 191—4:

In a clear eve the lover sail'd, and one
As clear and bright on aged Allen shone:
On the spot sanction'd by the last embrace
The old man stood! and sigh'd upon the place. (O.M.)

instead of ll. 253—274:

Oft to his children had the father told
Where he resided in the years of old;
When, without thought, his feeling and his pride
The native town adorn'd and magnified;
The streets, the markets, and the quays were all
Spacious and grand, and every building tall:
The tower and church were sea-marks leagues from land—
Men were amazed to see them look so grand!

VARIANTS

His father's house was then in Allen's eyes,
 But far increased in beauty and in size;
 And their small area where the schoolboys play'd,
 Room for an army had his fancy made:
 But now the dark and feeble mind debased,
 Contracted, sullied all that fancy graced,
 All spaces dwindled—streets but alleys seem'd:
 Then dreamt he now, or absent had he dream'd?
 The church itself, the lofty tower, the scene
 Of so much glory, was debased and mean:
 The mind each object in dull clothing dress'd,
 And its own sadness on each scene impress'd.

(O.M.)

Tale 3. l. 57. expence. l. 92. indure. *instead of* ll. 105—7:

Because in beaten ways we ever tread,
 And man by man, as sheep by sheep, is led,
 None start aside, but in the paths proceed,

(O.M.)

l. 377. controul. l. 398. controul. l. 502. conns. l. 514. controul.

Tale 4. Third Quotation. sundred. l. 32. teasing.

Tale 5. l. 334. expence. l. 348. extacy. l. 492. tear'd.
 l. 662. controuling. l. 703. curt'sy'd.

Tale 6. First Quotation. curtesy...curtesy. Third Quotation. gig.
 l. 226. doat.

Tale 7. l. 46. besprinkled. l. 162. rustics. l. 370. needs.

Tale 8. First Quotation. pityless. l. 36. tease. l. 39. saught.
 l. 256. controul. l. 325. intranc'd.

Tale 9. l. 15. mamas. l. 32. Montague. l. 55. to his failings
 blind. l. 56. the mind. l. 57. pourtray'd. l. 187. we knew not—
 'twas her fate.

Tale 10. Third Quotation. this spring. l. 106. dykes. l. 116,
 note. Laver. l. 148. Trav'ler. l. 162. Trav'ler's. l. 211. teiz'd.
 l. 288. Trav'ler. l. 321. Trav'ler. l. 349. dykes. l. 354. Trav'ler.

Tale 11. l. 15. Sampson. l. 42. was dignity. l. 127. Africk's.
 l. 233. arbor's. l. 297. bad.

Tale 13. l. 307. Colin.

Tale 14. Fourth Quotation. rooted sinew. l. 89. Who knows?—
 or build. l. 352. tease. l. 377. controul. l. 495. wo.

Tale 15. l. 10. earthy. l. 158. controul. l. 164. conceiving
 that the coming day. l. 248. are these sinners. l. 406. temptations.

Tale 16. l. 499. secresy. l. 581. sera.

Tale 17. Third Quotation, l. 3. act of our necessities. l. 139.
 controul. l. 299. paniers. l. 409. smoaky.

Tale 18. l. 196. controul.

Tale 19. l. 154. controul. l. 180. controul.

VARIANTS

Tale 20. l. 119. expence. l. 132. expence. l. 204. teaz'd.
l. 212. t'excuse it as a woman's way.

Tale 21. l. 47. teaze. l. 50. controul. l. 53. uncontroul'd.
l. 186. tenour.

TALES OF THE HALL. Variants in edition of 1819 (first edition).

'Original MS.' readings given as footnotes in *Life and Poems* (1834). These are distinguished as 'O.M.'

Variants in *Crabbe MSS.* in the possession of the Cambridge University Press. These are distinguished as 'U.P.'

Variants in *Crabbe MSS.* in the possession of Mrs Mackay. These are distinguished as 'M.'

Book I.

l. 151. inforce.

Book II.

Instead of ll. 15—20 :

Yet with this difference might observers find
Some kindred powers and features of the mind.
A love of honour in both spirits ruled,
But here by temper, there by trouble cool'd;
Their favourite objects, studies, themes, pursuits,
Had various beauties, merits, ends, and fruits. (O.M.)

instead of ll. 63—70 :

Joel nor time nor seasons could command,
He took his comforts as they came to hand;
Nor came they often, nor delay'd so long,
That they were habits either weak or strong;
What seem'd habitual was the urgent force
Of stern necessity that shaped his course. (O.M.)

Book III.

Instead of ll. 7—14 :

"Oh ! there's a wicked little world in schools,
"Where mischief suffers and oppression rules;
"Where mild, quiescent children oft endure
"What a long placid life shall fail to cure;
"Where virtuous boys, who shrink from early sin,
"Meet guilty rogues, who love to draw them in,
"Who take a pleasure at their just surprise,
"Who make them wicked, and proclaim them wise." (O.M.)

instead of ll. 23—34 :

"Behold him now, without the least pretence
"To such command—behold him five years hence;
"Mix'd in the world, his interest in his sight,
"How smooth he looks, his language how polite,
"No signs of anger, insult, scorn are seen;

VARIANTS

"The address is mild, the temper is serene;
 "His fiery passions are resign'd and still,
 "They yield to reason, or obey his will.
 "But are they dead?—Not so: should he attain
 "The wish'd-for fortune, they will live again;
 "Then shall the Tyrant be once more obey'd,
 "And all be Fags, whom he can make afraid." (O.M.)

instead of ll. 90—7:

"But when he sits in judgment, and decrees
 "What men should rule us, and what books should please,
 "And thus the merit of a critic gains,
 "Only for blowing out a Frenchman's brains,
 "I must demur, and in my mind retrace
 "The accountant Hector, and his rueful face;
 "But on he blunders! thinking he is wise,
 "Who has much strength, no matter where it lies." (O.M.)

instead of ll. 192—7:

"Again was made the offer, and again,
 "With threats, with noble promises, in vain.
 "When my Lord saw that nothing could be done,
 "He nobly cried,—'I'll fit him as my son;
 "Sir, will you go?' As meekly as a saint,
 "Charles humbly begg'd to stay on land and paint." (O.M.)

instead of ll. 204—29:

"Stubborn though mild, and fearing to offend,
 "He gain'd his freedom, and he lost his friend:
 "My Lord appeal'd to all the world, and cried,—
 "'There never breathed such stubbornness and pride;
 "'Do what you please, Sir, I am justified.'
 "So said my Lord; for he was grieved to find
 "Such vile ingratitude in base mankind.
 "The boy then wrote for bread. I saw him thrice;
 "His passions placid, he without a vice:
 "He sometimes painted, but was uninspired
 "By genius, unprotected, unadmired;
 "But pensive, sober, diligent, employ'd
 "His every hour, his life without a void,
 "He sought for little, nothing he enjoy'd. }
 "I fear he thought himself, because distress'd, []
 "An injured genius, by the world oppress'd." (O.M.)

instead of ll. 253—60:

"Years past away; I think some twenty-five,
 "Again I saw him, and but just alive,
 "And still forbidding, silent, sullen, proud,
 "As one whose claims were just, and not allow'd.
 "He saw me, saw my sympathy with pain,
 "Received my humble offers with disdain,
 "And sternly told me not to come again." } (O.M.)

VARIANTS

instead of ll. 296—301:

"Thou, Charles! unaided by a noble friend,
 "Hadst spent a careful life, as others spend;
 "But when thy patron's vanity and thine
 "Were made by cruel fortune to combine,
 "'Twas then th' unhappy wretch was lifted high
 "'On golden stilts, and seem'd to touch the sky;
 "'But when the tempter hand withdraws the props,
 "'The vision closes, and the victim drops."

(O.M.)

instead of ll. 362—87:

"The boy was tall, but with a mincing air,
 "Blue, languid eyes, pale cheek, and flaxen hair;
 "His temper fretful, but his spirits mild,
 "Loved by mamma, by all her maidens styled
 "The wittiest darling, and the sweetest child.
 "In those dear times, when that mamma had rule,
 "There was much play, few lessons, and no school;
 "But, oh! misfortune—when the lady died,
 "No second wife her honour'd place supplied,
 "But one dishonour'd; and she quickly sent
 "All who had grief to grieve in banishment:
 "No longer now was there the rush of joy,
 "The flood of fondness o'er the happy boy;
 "No more indulgence by the maidens shown,
 "For master's pleasure, purchase of their own;
 "But they as spies were to new service sent,
 "And the sad boy to school and banishment."

}
[]

(O.M.)

Book IV.

Instead of ll. 3—22:

"Brother," said George, "when I beheld you last,
 "The time how distant!—Well! the time is past—
 "I had not then these comforts you behold,
 "Things that amuse us when we're getting old.
 "These Pictures now! experienced men will say,
 "They're genuine all, and so perhaps they may;
 "They cost the money, that I'm sure is true,
 "And therefore, Richard, I will say it too.
 "Music you find; for hither ladies come;
 "They make infernal uproar in the room.
 "I bear it. Why? because I must expect
 "To pay for honour, and I fear neglect.
 "And if attraction from your person flies,
 "You must some pleasure from your purse devise:
 "But this apart—the triflers should not know
 "That they can comfort or regret bestow."

(O.M.)

instead of ll. 76—7:

"That gun itself, that breaks upon the ear,
 "Has something suited to the dying year."
 "The dying partridge!" cried, with much disdain,
 "Th' offended 'Squire—"Our laws are made in vain:

VARIANTS

"The country, Richard, would not be amiss,
 "But for these plagues, and villanies like this;
 "Wealth breeds the curse that fixes on the land,
 "And strife and heritage go hand in hand."

(O.M.)

instead of ll. 88—130:

They walk'd along, through mead and shaded wood,
 And stubble ground, where late abundance stood,
 And in the vale, where winter waters glide,
 O'er pastures stretching up the mountain side.

With a shrewd smile, but mix'd with look severe,
 The landlord view'd the promise of the year.

"See! that unrivall'd flock! they, they alone

"Have the vast body on the slender bone;

"They are the village boast, the country's theme,

"Fleece of such staple! flesh in such esteem!"

Richard gave praise, but not in rapturous style;

He chose his words, and spoke them with a smile:

"Brother," said he, "and if I take you right,

"I am full glad—these things are your delight;

"I see you proud, but,"—speaking half aside—

"Is, now, the pleasure equal to the pride?"

A transient flush on George's face appear'd,

Cloudy he look'd, and then his looks were clear'd:

"Look at yon hind!" said he,—"in very deed,

"His is the pride and pleasure in the breed;

"He has delight, he judges—I the name,

"And the whole praise—I speak it to my shame.

"Oh! Richard, Richard, tell me, if you can,

"What will engage and fix the mind of man?"

"Suppose," said he, "we look about the green,

"In yonder cots some objects may be seen,

"T' excite our pity, or relieve our spleen."

"Oh! they are thieves and blockheads," George replied,

"Unjust, ungrateful, and unsatisfied;

"To grasp at all, their study, thought, and care,

"All would be thieves and plunderers, if they dare;

"His envious nature not a clown conceals,

"But bluntly shows the insolence he feels."

"And whence," said Richard, "should the vice proceed,

"But from their want of knowledge, and their need?

"Let them know more, or let them better feel,

"And I'll engage they'll neither threat nor steal."

"Brother," said George, "your pity makes you blind

"To all that's vile and odious in mankind;

"T is true your notions may appear divine,

"But for their justice—let us go and dine."

(O.M.)

Book V.

l. 182. woe. l. 415. controul.

VARIANTS

Book VI.

The Book opens:

The evening came: "My Brother, what employs
"Thy mind?" said Richard; "what disturbs thy joys?
"Hast thou not all the good the world can give,
"And liv'st a life that kings might sigh to live?
"Can nothing please thee? Thou wert wont to seize
"On passing themes, and make the trifles please.
"Thy Muse has many a pleasant fancy bred,
"And clothed in lively manner!—is she dead?"

"Not dead but sick, and I too weary grow
"Of reaping nothing from the things I sow.
"What is the pleasure—thou perhaps canst say—
"Of playing tunes, if none can hear thee play?
"Timid and proud, the world I cannot court,
"Nor show my labours for the critic's sport.
"Hast thou the courage, Richard? hast thou tried
"An Author's perils? hast thou felt his pride?
"For vain the efforts, and they quickly tire,
"If we alone our precious things admire."

"Not so," said Richard, and acquired a look
That some expression from his feelings took;
"Oh! my dear Brother, if this Muse of mine,
"Who prompts the idle thought, the trifling line,
"If she who calmly looks around, nor more
"Muse of the Mad, the Foolish, and the Poor,
"If she can pleasure—and she can—impart,
"Can wing the fancy, can enlarge the heart;
"What must a Muse of strength, of force, of fire,
"In the true Poet's ample mind inspire?
"What must he feel, who can the soul express
"Of saint or hero?—he must be no less.
"Nor less of evil minds he knows the pain,
"But quickly lost the anguish and the stain,
"While with the wisest, happiest, purest, best,
"His soul assimilates and loves to rest.
"Crowns would I spurn, and empires would I lose,
"For inspiration from the sacred Muse."

"A song," said George, "and I my secret store,
"Confined in dust and darkness, will explore.
"Poet with poet, bard and critic too,
"We fear no censure, and dread no review.
"A judge so placed must be to errors kind,
"And yield the mercy that he hopes to find;
"Begin then, Richard, put thy fears aside;
"Shall I condemn, who must myself be tried?
"In me at least my Brother may confide.
"In hope of wearing, I shall yield the bays,
"And my self-love shall give my rival praise."

}
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(O.M.)

instead of ll. 18—30:

"Wilt thou explain? I shall not grieve to share
"A lover's sorrow, or a husband's care?"

VARIANTS

Kindness like this had moved a sterner man,
 Richard much more. He smiled, and thus began:—
 "No more I loved the sea; that plunge had tamed
 "My blood, by youth in idleness inflamed:
 "To my affairs I forced my mind t' attend,
 "And sought the town to counsel with a friend.
 "Much we debated—Could I now resign
 "My earthly views, and look to things divine?
 "Could I to merchandise my mind persuade,
 "And wait in patience for the gain of trade?
 "Or if I could not early habits quit,
 "Had I a stock, and could subsist on wit?
 "Measures like these became my daily themes,
 "My airy castles, my projector's dreams.
 "But health, so long neglected, now became
 "No more the blessing of my failing frame:
 "A fever seized it, of that dangerous kind,
 "That while it taints the blood, infects the mind.
 "I traced her flight as Reason slowly fled,
 "And her last act assured me Hope was dead:
 "But Reason err'd, and when she came again
 "To aid the senses and direct the brain,
 "She found a body weak, but well disposed
 "For life's enjoyments, and the grave was closed.
 "But danger past, and my recovery slow,
 "I sought the health that mountain gales bestow,
 "And quiet walks where peace and violets grow. }
 "Now, my dear Brother, when the languid frame []
 "Has this repose, and when the blood is tame,
 "Yet strength increasing, and when every hour
 "Gives some increase of pleasure and of power,
 "When every sense partakes of fresh delight,
 "And every object wakes an appetite;
 "When the mind rests not, but for ever roves
 "On all around, and as it meets approves;
 "Then feels the heart its bliss, that season then is love.
 "Think of me thus disposed, and think me then
 "Retired from crowded streets and busy men,
 "In a neat cottage, by the sweetest stream
 "That ever warbled in a poet's dream;
 "An ancient wood behold, so vast, so deep,
 "That hostile armies might in safety sleep,
 "Where loving pairs had no observers near,
 "And fearing not themselves, had none to fear;
 "There to fair walks, fresh meadows, and clear skies,
 "I fled as flee the weary and the wise." (O.M.)

instead of ll. 174—5:

"With whom she tarried, a delighted guest!
 "Delightful ever! blessing still and bless'd." (O.M.)

l. 359. woe.

VARIANTS

Book VII.

Instead of ll. 533—4 :

And thus she said, and with an air designed
To look and be affectionate and kind. (U.P.)

l. 551. woe. *instead of ll. 593—8 :*

Come, my dear Friend, discard that Brow of Care :
What was at first intended all things are ;
All by the mighty Cause for bliss designed
The only good of Matter and in Mind.
So was I taught by one who taught me all
That I the first and only good can call ! (U.P.)

instead of ll. 601—2 :

I meant again, in spite of every Cow,
To pass that way and hear my Shepherd's Vow. (U.P.)

after l. 625 :

When the sun is descended the moon will arise ;
And sweeter her softer and mellow Ray,
When the blossom no longer is fair in our Eyes,
The Fruit will enlarge and our losses repay ;
And when from the cheek the young Roses decay,
Tis a Sign that the Fire is collected within :
No longer for Boys the light flower to display,
But manly Affections to wake and to win. (U.P.)

instead of ll. 626—41 :

My Damon was the first to wake
The Flame that slept but cannot die ;
My Damon is the last to take
The best the truest softest Sigh.
The Life between is nothing worth :
O ! cast it all as vile away,
Save the sweet Day that gave it Birth,
And this a fonder happier Day.
O tell me not what I have done,
When there is so much done amiss ;
For who can fate and madness shun
In such bewildering World as this ?
Love can a thousand Faults forgive,
Or with a tender Smile reprove ;
And now let nought in Memory live,
But that we meet and that we love. (U.P.)

instead of ll. 664—7 :

Were you not Witness how I blossomed then,
Blushing and blooming in the Eyes of Men ;
Made by one sex a Goddess, and denied
Respect and notice by the other's Pride ? (U.P.)

VARIANTS

instead of ll. 682—91 :

Is it not written, he who came to save
The aduress [] of her Crime forgave;
Would the lost sheep all graciously restore,
And bade the weeping Sinner sin no more?
Yes, this is true, but where the Eye that reads
The broken Spirit or the Heart that bleeds?
But where the Heart that could the Deed deplore,
And where the Hand that would the Mind restore;
That could the sinful Soul on trust receive
And, tho' all urged against Belief, believe? (U.P.)

instead of ll. 702—9 :

With Spirits low and ill-directed Mind
She soon her [] of penitence resigned;
And rushed again into the World, prepar'd
To do whatever thoughtless Frenzy dared.
And so she perished!
Nay! while yet disposed
T' enjoy the world, the world's adventures closed. (U.P.)

instead of ll. 736—7 :

To save from sin the long expected pay,
And call hence Souls whose bodies waste away. (U.P.)

instead of ll. 742—3 :

And I a fellow sinner! who enquired
If ought beside the feeble Heart required
Was by, to watch the Dawn of Hope, to cheer
The drooping Spirit, and to prove how dear
The [Loving] Soul may be whose Turning is sincere. (U.P.)

instead of l. 751 :

To think for what was formed this Creature Man! (U.P.)

instead of l. 757 :

Gold, to enlarge the Treasures that abound. (U.P.)

after l. 766 :

I shuddered, R[ichard], at the general View—
The Work undone—What yet I had to do! (U.P.)

l. 781. woe. l. 782. woe. l. 789. woe.

Book VIII.

Variant of ll. 33—67 :

The Brothers' Subject on their Morning Ride
Was, as it chanced, the Misery of Pride!
* * * *

[illegible attempts.]

The very Virtues suffer! and but few
Altho' unshamed bear Want and pity too.

VARIANTS

This is the Serpent Poverty that Stings !
And Wealth, thus flying, certain misery brings.

The Wretched then the common fate deplore
And mourn Enjoyments that return no more.
They who so dearly loved in happier times
Doubt the tried Worth; their Sorrows are their Crimes.
They spoil the Temper; they disturb the rest;
Men fly the Scold, the Comforter, the Guest. (M.)

instead of ll. 48—53 :

"Oh! that we had the virtuous pride to show
"We know ourselves what all about us know;
"Nor, when our board contains a single dish,
"Tell lying tales of market-men and fish!
"We know 'tis hard from higher views to fall—
"What is not hard when life is trial all?" (O.M.)

after l. 67 :

"But I digress, dear Richard, who despise
"Tellers of tales, who stop and moralize;
"As some good editors of Esop used
"Their privilege, and readers' sense abused:
"Who half a page to write their fable took,
"And just a page and half to swell their book.
"But to that gentle being I return,
"And, as I treat of patience, let me learn." (O.M.)

instead of ll. 106—7 :

"Like Saul's fair daughters, as by Cowley sung;
"Not from a monarch, but a yeoman sprung." (O.M.)

after l. 113 :

Who gazed at Jane saw Wonder and Delight;
Who looked on Lucy blessed the pleasing Sight.
The Air of Lucy her Admirers held
In pleasing Bondage; that of Jane repell'd. (M.)

after l. 119 :

Lucy not often could those Looks command,
But had the sober praise and offered Hand;
For those who breathed for Jane those Sighs of fire
Asked not their Reason, What do I desire?
While Lucy's Lovers felt the Wishes rise
And could explain the purport of their Sighs.
In future day one spake how Friendships please,
And one, a Lover, whom we charm and teize;
And then began the speech of Jane to raise
Men's awe, and Lucy's to obtain their praise. (M.)

VARIANTS

instead of ll. 196—207 :

Now Lucy's Lover was a plain good Man,
 Who meant to marry on a saving Plan.
 Jane is perhaps the prettier one to view,
 He judged; but [has] the Keener Judgment too;
 And, if her Eye be more than Lucy's bright,
 And beams upon you with a fiercer Light,
 A face may be admired; but, put the Case
 A Man shall marry, what avails a face?
 A Wife that[s] pretty her Conditions makes;
 A Wife that[s] prudent rather gives than takes.
 Beauty will cost require and Wealth command,
 But there is Safety in a closing Hand;
 And what if Lucy to the needy sends
 Too great a portion and the deed defends,
 That tis her own; there's prudence in the Words
 That will preserve the Good that is her Lord's.
 Besides, there's not a Virtue we possess
 So soon restrain'd as giving to distress;
 And, then, a rival makes a woman nice,
 And Jane's admirer will enhance her price.
 Thus, thinking but concealing what he thought,
 This cautious Lover Lucy's favour sought.

(M.)

after l. 231 :

Or why the Fear? and all that seemed so good
 Was only Slyness rightly understood;
 Then, too, his father living held the Son
 From the sad Course he was disposed to run.

(M.)

instead of ll. 255—8 :

"Near to the village, where they now abide,
 "In their own style—the vulgar call it pride—
 "Dwelt the fair sisters: good they were and kind,
 "That prying scandal scarce could error find—
 "And candour none—they spent, they spared, they gave
 "Just as they ought to give, to spare, to save;
 "Like two queen-myrtles in an arbour's side,
 "So they abode, and so might still abide,
 "But for a blight! it wounds me at the heart,
 "That I have grief and anguish to impart."

(O.M.)

l. 287. alchemist. *after l. 419 :*

"Thus fill'd with fear, that evening they attend
 "To his last home an ancient village-friend;
 "And they, reflecting on the old man's days,
 "Who living had their love, and now their praise—
 "That good old man, with so much native sense,
 "Such health and ease, such hope with competence:
 "They could but own, if such should be their lot,
 "They should be thankful!—It, alas! was not."

(O.M.)

VARIANTS

l. 550. ecstasy. *after* l. 824 :

"I read your looks, my Brother, you would give
 "Largely to these—they should in comfort live,
 "Nor labour thus; but you would find it hard
 "To gain assent: professions they regard
 "As their experience bids them, and they run
 "From ready love, as they would treachery shun;
 "Yet have I woo'd them long, and they attend
 "With growing trust—they treat me as a friend,
 "And talk of my probation; but, afraid,
 "They take my counsel, but refuse my aid."

(O.M.)

Book IX.

Instead of ll. 150—5 :

"The weeks fled smoothly, five or six, before,
 "Bless'd in the present, he could think of more.
 "Two months beside were at his villa spent,
 "Where first enraptured, he became content;
 "Then went to town, scarce knowing why he went.
 "His lady with him, as a wife should be—
 "Talk of a moon of honey! there were three."

}
[]

(O.M.)

instead of ll. 176—7 :

"For pairs not loving, cannot music find,
 "And loving pairs have music in the mind."

(O.M.)

Book XI.

The Book opens :

That gentle Spinster, whom our Squire approved
 So well, they judged aright who said he loved;
 Though, when they thought to what the love would lead,
 They err'd—for neither would so far proceed.
 This Maiden Lady, to her promise just,
 Gave them her story.—She could safely trust
 Her neighbours both: the one she long had known,
 The other kindness and respect had shown.
 Frankly not fearless, from her early youth,
 She gave her tale, nor would disguise a truth;
 Timid in places, and with some restraint,
 But still resolved the very facts to paint,
 With plaintive smile she prefaced what she spoke,
 And the Friends listen'd with attentive look.

(O.M.)

after l. 67 :

"Think not of love! it is a chance indeed,
 "When love and prudence side by side proceed.
 "Nay, when they do, I doubtfully approve—
 "Love baffles prudence—Oh! beware of love."

(O.M.)

VARIANTS

variant of ll. 109—31 :

He knew that Girls had heard that youth is bold,
And he would show how youthful were the old.

He knew the Vices that the youthful boast,
And he desired to show the form and Ghost
Of naked Evil, rob'd of every Grace
That could our Anger or Contempt displace—
Not as the drunken Slave to make me think
How odious Vice, but hoping I should drink.

Repelled awhile, he answered, Did you drive
A Charge so precious, fear would be alive.

(U.P.)

instead of ll. 150—1 :

He said that Beauty now would scarcely sell;
The drug was plenteous, and the Market fell.

(U.P.)

after l. 163 :

And the weak side of woman—but he spied,
So it appeared to me, the viler side.

(U.P.)

instead of ll. 164—5 :

And all that this superior knowledge meant
Was to delude the weak and innocent.

(U.P.)

variant of ll. 190—221 :

My Mother too seemed now disposed to try
A Life of Reason and Tranquillity;
She had till lately health and Spirits kept;
She ate in Comfort, and in Quiet slept.
But our late Subject was a kind that fills
The Mind, and poison in the Heart instills.
For five and forty years my Mother bore
Her Placid Looks, and Dress becoming wore;
She would a Compliment with pleasure take
That no undue Impression seemed to make;
But now her Nerves became disturbed and weak,
And we must Aid from a Physician seek :
A Scotch Physician, who had just began
To settle here—a very handsome Man,
And very wise, for I with Lovers twain
Was in his eye a very Child again;
While my dear Mother, twenty years a Wife,
Was to decide the Fortune of his life;
And she decided—In a general way
Mama her power was willing to display.

But now like Monarch weary of a Throne
She would no longer reign, at least alone !
She held her pulse, and with a Look so sweet
Gave him to feel how softly they could beat.

(U.P.)

VARIANTS

after l. 327:

It was reported, nay it was believed
That both the wary parties were deceived;
For both had learnt the wicked world to cheat
And be a match for all its vile Deceit. (U.P.)

instead of ll. 323—5:

Was just his present purpose to pursue,
Send him to college and there let him learn
To live, and to his numerous brothers turn! (U.P.)

variant of ll. 336—7:

In fact our hearts we gave as Lovers give
Before we asked if we as Men could live.
I lov'd the Youth, nor had I doubts that he
Had tender thoughts and faithful Hopes like me, }
And, as our Love was now, so would it ever be. [] (U.P.)

instead of l. 410:

Were placed our yellow plates of Stafford Ware. (U.P.)

instead of ll. 433—4:

While Biddy slept, upon a Bed so hard
And coarse, I laid and was of Sleep debarred. (U.P.)

instead of ll. 508—14:

And what, as armed with right and power they asked,
Are your Soul's Contests? and their own unmasked.
Confessing thoughts so strange and views so wild
I thought them Dreams, or fancies of a Child
Could she, they ask, her best attempts condemn,
And did she long to touch the Garment's hem, }
And was it so with her, for so it was with them? [] (U.P.)

instead of ll. 517—26:

My Mother kindly lent her teachers Aid
To win the Soul of her deluded maid;
I was compelled her female friends to hear,
But suffer'd not one bearded teacher near;
Tho' more than one attempted with their whine
And 'Sister! Sister!' turn to love divine;
But my contending Spirit to direct
Was what I vow'd no Brother should effect;
But O! their Preacher, would I could receive
His precious dropping of the Dew at Eve! (U.P.)

instead of ll. 533—6:

But soon appear'd and spoke in mode correct,
With all the cold dead freedom of the Sect;
Of his Conversion with conceit he spoke
Before he orders from his Bishop took. (U.P.)

VARIANTS

after l. 548:

He then with self-applause his valour told
And how his boyish Love for me grew cold. (U.P.)

instead of ll. 566—9:

On Sidmouth terrace pace at morn and noon,
Or view from Dawlish rocks the full-orb'd moon,
At Exmouth beacon the far bay explore,
Or quiet sit at Teignmouth's pebbly shore;
These scenes are lovely all, and will your peace restore. [] (O.M.)

instead of ll. 574—87:

Dear scenes of social comfort, friendly ease,
The power of pleasing, the delight to please;
When friends agreed the views around t' explore,
When sympathising minds exchanged their store;
When fear was banish'd, and no form desired,
But such as decency and sense required;
When each in meeting wore the looks that make
Such strong impression, and preclude mistake;
When looks, and words, and manner all declare
What hearts, and thoughts, and dispositions are—
In fact, when we in various modes express
That we are happy all! all answer yes!
This is indeed approach to perfect happiness. []
Dear objects! scatter'd in the world around,
Whom do ye gladden? where may ye be found?
Ye who excited joy by day, by night,
Ye who delighted to dispense delight,
Ye who to please the sadden'd temper strove,
Who, when ye loved not, show'd the effect of love,
Ye who are blessings wheresoe'er ye dwell,
Accept the wishes of a long farewell! (O.M.)

instead of ll. 600—1:

"No, I confess, there was a proneness yet
"To think with foolish fondness and regret." (U.P.)

variant of ll. 620—38:

Are we not good, benevolent and just;
Must not all love us? We are sure they must.
Are we not read in works of every kind;
Are not prudent, rational, refined;
Are not our thoughts correct, our words discreet,
And our Life void of folly, fraud, deceit;
And where can we on Earth a purer Spirit meet?
Here the Heart ceased; I answer'd to the Heart:
A vile Deceiver, and a vain, thou art.
First, thy Religion I can plainly see
Wants the first requisite—Humility. []

VARIANTS

We are so pure, the humble mind's [resource],
Truth and Repentance, we may drop of course,
And with the gallant Frenchman at the Cry
Of the last Day say boldly, here am I! (U.P.)

variant of ll. 649—52:

What is the good that thy whole life has done
Compared with her one day, a single one? (O.M.)

variant of ll. 692—7:

The tears of tender Souls which for him fell,
And strong Persuasion, Brother! all is well. }
Tarry, and Heav'n is thine; depart, and there is hell.— []
So I from frenzy's Zeal and folly's Creed
Was by Exertion and Discretion freed. (U.P.)

variant of ll. 712—20:

Still he would come, and talk as idlers do }
Both of his old opinions and his new; []
For now he was convinced that nothing could be true.
Barriers so strong against all Truth were placed
That by the wise no Tenet was embraced.
This was religion here that there was spurned;
Then how could Truth be anywhere discerned?
Her as a mistress Men indeed pursue }
In Chace for ever, never in their view; [] (U.P.)
And who shall dare affirm that anything is true?

variant of ll. 816—27:

But in that world the faithful Youth shall view
One like himself, as generous and as true.
Such our Discourse; but, growing more refin'd,
And suited only to a Soul resigned—
For she would far in her fair View proceed
And as I could, I doubted or agreed—
I asked if Lovers took the wiser Way
Who to their Death their Union would delay,
For fear that Marriage should the Vision spoil
And the pure pleasure of the fancy soil? (U.P.)

variant of ll. 834—49:

And all betrayed a Man who had of Gold a store.
The comely Man moved, onward, and a pair
Of comely Maidens waited, with an Air
Of Doubt, till one exclaim'd with Voice profound,
And, O! 'tis Henry, dropt upon the Ground.
But she recover'd, and, I pray you, guess
What then ensued and how much Happiness.
Just as the Lover chanc'd his Home to find,
The Lady fixed on other home her Mind;
They parted Lovers who were grieved to part;
They met as Neighbours! heal'd was either heart.

VARIANTS

Each on the others Looks could raptured dwell,
They now could say, You look extremely well;
She had prepared in some blessed world to meet;
The Knight, of purchasing a snug Retreat,
In this and there in good Regard to live:
Among their Friends 'twas all it now could give. (U.P.)

variant of ll. 864—75:

What Time has done, gross food and vulgar Trade
Has all impaired that Love and Nature made.
I cannot take him—I my Friend approved,
Who dare refuse when she no longer loved.
But he was loud and loving, fierce and free,
And weak and timid vain and grateful She.
Thus sundry motives more than I can name
Rose on his side, and she a Wife became. (U.P.)

instead of ll. 890—3:

Yet his the Comfort of an Heart that feels
A single day, and that the morrow heals;
And yet he grieved a while, and he would weep,
And swear profusely I had murdered sleep;
Had quite unman'd him for heroic Vein,
And he could only murmur and complain. (U.P.)

variant of ll. 903—4:

Yet e'er we parted he his Prayer renewed,
And urged me "Do not live in Solitude!
Wert thou my Lady to the Study take
O! what a Desdemona wouldst thou make." (U.P.)

after l. 904:

And then he spouted—till I cried, Is he
The man I loved? Oh! that could never be.
No! time upon the outward beauty preys,
And the mind's beauty in its vice decays. (O.M.)

instead of ll. 910—2:

But that he lost, and with a wither'd hand,
Stood at his father's gate, as beggars stand;
But his were jealous brethren, and they kept
Their dying father from him, till he slept. (O.M.)

instead of ll. 926—8:

And no Adventure marked the waste of Years;
I thought me past them, but I met with one,
A call to Folly e'er the pasts were done. (U.P.)

VARIANTS. VOL. I. ADDENDA.

THE LIBRARY. 'Original MS.' readings given as footnotes in *Life and Poems* (1834).

After l. 4:

Where can the wretched lose their cares, and hide
The tears of sorrow from the eyes of pride?
Can they in silent shades a refuge find
From all the scorn and malice of mankind?
From wit's disdain, and wealth's provoking sneer,
From folly's grin, and humour's stupid leer,
And clamour's iron tongue, censorious and severe?
There can they see the scenes of nature gay,
And shake the gloomy dreams of life away?
Without a sigh, the hope of youth give o'er,
And with aspiring honour climb no more.

}
}

Alas! we fly to peaceful shades in vain;
Peace dwells within, or all without is pain:
No storm-tost sailor sighs for slumbering seas—
He dreads a tempest, but desires a breeze.
The placid waves with silent swell disclose
A clearer view, and but reflect his woes.
So life has calms, in which we only see
A fuller prospect of our misery.

When the sick heart, by no design employ'd,
Throbs o'er the past, or suffer'd, or enjoy'd,
In former pleasures finding no relief,
And pain'd anew in every former grief.
Can friends console us when our cares distress,
Smile on our woes, and make misfortunes less?
Alas! like winter'd leaves, they fall away,
Or more disgrace our prospects by delay;
The genial warmth, the fostering sap is past,
That kept them faithful, and that held them fast.

Where shall we fly?—to yonder still retreat,
The haunt of Genius and the Muses' seat,
Where all our griefs in others' strains rehearse,
Speak with old Time, and with the dead converse;
Till Fancy, far in distant regions flown,
Adopts a thousand schemes, and quits her own;
Skims every scene, and plans with each design,

VARIANTS

Towers in each thought, and lives in every line ;
From clime to clime with rapid motion flies,
Weeps without woe, and without sorrow sighs ;
To all things yielding, and by all things sway'd,
To all obedient, and by all obey'd ;
The source of pleasures, noble and refined,
And the great empress of the Poet's mind.

Here led by thee, fair Fancy, I behold
The mighty heroes, and the bards of old !
For here the Muses sacred vigils keep,
And all the busy cares of being sleep ;
No monarch covets war, nor dreams of fame,
No subject bleeds to raise his tyrant's name,
No proud great man, or man that would be great,
Drives modest merit from its proper state,
Nor rapine reaps the good by labour sown,
Nor envy blasts a laurel, but her own.

Yet Contemplation, silent goddess, here,
In her vast eye, makes all mankind appear,
All Nature's treasures, all the stores of Art,
That fire the fancy, or engage the heart,
The world's vast views, the fancy's wild domain,
And all the motley objects of the brain :
Here mountains hurl'd on mountains proudly rise,
Far, far o'er Nature's dull realities ;
Eternal verdure decks a sacred clime,
Eternal spring for ever blooms in rhyme,
And heroes honour'd for imputed deeds,
And saints adored for visionary creeds,
Legends and tales, and solitude and sighs,
Poor doating dreams, and miserable lies,
The empty bubbles of a pensive mind,
And Spleen's sad effort to debase mankind.

Here Wonder gapes at Story's dreadful page,
And Valour mounts by true poetic rage,
And Pity weeps to hear the mourning maid,
And Envy saddens at the praise convey'd.
Devotion kindles at the pious strain,
And mocks the madness of the fool's disdain :
Here gentle Delicacy turns her eye
From the loose page, and blushes her reply,
Alone, unheeded, calls her soul to arms,
Fears every thought, and flies from all alarms.
Pale Study here, to one great point resign'd ;
Derides the various follies of mankind ;
As distant objects sees their several cares,
And with his own their trifling work compares ;
But still forgets like him men take their view,
And near their own, his works are trifling too :—
So suns and planets scarcely fill the eye
When earth's poor hills and man's poor huts are nigh ;
But, were the eye in airy regions tost,
The world would lessen, and her hills be lost ;

VARIANTS

And were the mighty orbs above us known,
No world would seem so trifling as our own.

Here looking back, the wond'ring soul surveys
The sacred relics of departed days,
Where grace, and truth, and excellence reside,
To claim our praise, and mortify our pride;
Favour'd by fate, our mighty fathers found
The virgin Muse, with every beauty crown'd:
They woo'd and won; and, banish'd their embrace,
She comes a harlot to their feebl' race:
Deck'd in false taste, with gaudy shows of art
She charms the eye, but touches not the heart;
By thousands courted, but by few caress'd,
False when pursued, and fatal when possess'd.

From hence we rove, with Fancy for our guide,
O'er this wide world, and other worlds more wide,
Where other suns their vital power display,
And round revolving planets dart the day;
Where comets blaze, by mortals unsurvey'd,
And stray where Galileo never stray'd;
Where God himself conducts each vast machine,
Uncensured by mankind, because unseen.

Here, too, we trace the varied scenes of life,
The tyrant husband, the retorting wife,
The hero fearful to appear afraid,
The thoughts of the deliberating maid;
The snares for virtue, and the turns of fate,
The lie of trade, and madness of debate;
Here force deals death around, while fools applaud,
And caution watches o'er the lips of fraud;
Whate'er the world can show, here scorn derides,
And here suspicion whispers what it hides—
The secret thought, the counsel of the breast,
The coming news, and the expected jest.....
High panegyric, in exalted style,
That smiles for ever, and provokes a smile,
And Satire, with her fav'rite handmaids by—
Here loud abuse, there simpering irony....
All now display'd, without a mask are known,
And every vice in nature, but our own.

Yet Pleasure too, and Virtue, still more fair,
To this blest seat with mutual speed repair;
The social sweets in life's securer road,
Its bliss unenvied, its substantial good,
The happy thought that conscious virtue gives,
And all that ought to live, and all that lives.

after l. 104 :

Maxims I glean, of mighty pith and force,
And moral themes to shine in a discourse,
But, tired with these, I take a lighter train,
Tuned to the times, impertinent and vain.
The tarts which wits provide for taste decay'd,

VARIANTS

And syllabubs by frothy wittings made,
An easy, idle, thoughtless, graceless throng,
Pun, jest, and quibble, epigram and song,
Trifles to which declining genius bends,
And steps by which aspiring wit ascends.
Now sad and slow, with cautious step I tread,
And view around the venerable dead;
For where in all her walks shall study seize
Such monuments of human state as these?

after L. 430:

"Ah! happy age," the youthful poet cries,
"Ere laws arose—ere tyrants bade them rise;
"No land-marks then the happy swain beheld,
"Nor lords walk'd proudly o'er the furrow'd field;
"Nor through distorted ways did Avarice roam,
"To fetch delights for Luxury at home:
"But mutual joy the friends of Nature proved,
"And swains were faithful to the nymphs they loved."
"Mistaken bards! all nations first were rude;
"Man! proud, unsocial, prone to solitude:
"O'er hills, or vales, or floods, was fond to roam—
"The mead his garden, and the rock his home:
"For flying prey he search'd a savage coast—
"Want was his spur, and liberty his boast."

after l. 570:

Ah! lost, for ever lost, to me these charms,
These lofty notions and divine alarms,
Too dearly bought—maturer judgment calls
My pensive soul from tales and madrigals—
For who so blest or who so great as I,
Wing'd round the globe with Rowland or Sir Guy?
Alas! no more I see my queen repair
To balmy bowers that blossom in the air,
Where on their rosy beds the Graces rest,
And not a care lies heavy on the breast.
No more the hermit's mossy cave I choose,
Nor o'er the babbling brook delight to muse;
My doughty giants all are slain or fled,
And all my knights—blue, green, and yellow—dead!
Magicians cease to charm me with their art,
And not a griffin flies to glad my heart.
No more the midnight fairy tribe I view,
All in the merry moonshine tippling dew.
The easy joys that charm'd my sportive youth,
Fly Reason's power, and shun the voice of Truth.
Maturer thoughts severer taste prepares,
And baffles every spell that charm'd my cares.
Can Fiction, then, the noblest bliss supply,
Or joy reside in inconsistency?

VARIANTS

after l. 594 :

But who are these, a tribe that soar above,
And tell more tender tales of modern love?
A NOVEL train! the brood of old Romance,
Conceived by Folly on the coast of France,
That now with lighter thought, and gentler fire,
Usurp the honours of their drooping sire;
And still fantastic, vain, and trifling, sing
Of many a soft and inconsistent thing,—
Of rakes repenting, clogg'd in Hymen's chain—
Of nymph reclined by unpresuming swain—
Of captains, colonels, lords, and amorous knights,
That find in humbler nymphs such chaste delights,
Such heavenly charms, so gentle, yet so gay,
That all their former follies fly away.
Honour springs up, where'er their looks impart
A moment's sunshine to the harden'd heart—
A virtue, just before the rover's jest,
Grows like a mushroom in his melting breast.
Much, too, they tell of cottages and shades,
Of balls, and routs, and midnight masquerades,
Where dangerous men and dangerous mirth reside,
And Virtue goes—on purpose to be tried.

These are the tales that wake the soul to life,
That charm the sprightly niece and forward wife,
That form the manners of a polish'd age,
And each pure easy moral of the Stage.

Thus to her friend the ever-faithful she—
The tender Delia—writes, securely free—
Delia from school was lately bold to rove,
Where yet Lucinda meditated love.

“Oh thou, the partner of my pensive breast,
“And, but for one! its most delightful guest,
“But for that one of whom 'twas joy to talk,
“When the chaste moon gleam'd o'er our ev'ning walk,
“And cooing fondly in the neighbouring groves
“The pretty songsters all enjoy'd their loves;
“Receive! as witness all ye powers! I send,
“With melting heart, this token of thy friend.
“Calm was the night! and every breeze was low;
“Swift ran the stream—but, ah! the moments slow!
“Fly swift, ye moments! slowly run, thou stream,
“And on thy margin let a maiden dream.

“Methought he came, my Harry, young and gay,
“The very youth that stole my heart away.
“I wake. Surprise! yet guess how blest was I!
“With looks of love—the very youth was by.
“‘Whose is that form my Delia's bosom hides?
“‘What youth divinely blest within presides?’
“He spoke and sigh'd. His sighs my fear suppress,
“He seized his angel form, and actions spoke the rest.

“Oh, Virtue! brighter than the noontide ray!
“Still guide my steps, and guide them nature's way;

VARIANTS

"With sacred precepts fill the youthful mind,
 "Soothe all its cares, and force it to be kind."
 Thus, gentle passions warm the generous maid,
 No more reluctant, and no more afraid;
 Thus Virtue shines, and in her loveliest dress
 Not over nice, nor Virtue to excess.
 Near these I look, and lo! a reptile race,
 In goodly vests conceal the want of grace;
 The brood of Humour, Fancy, Frolic, Fun,
 The tale obscene, the miserable pun;
 The jest that Laughter loves, he knows not why,
 And Whim tells quaintly with distorted eye.
 Here Languor, yawning, pays his first devoirs,
 And skims sedately o'er his dear Memoirs;
 Here tries his tedious moments to employ,
 And, palsied by enjoyment, dreams of joy;
 From all the tribe his little knowledge steals,
 From dull "Torpedoes," and "Electric Eels;"
 And every trifle of a trifling age,
 That shames the closet, or degrades the Stage.

after l. 601:

Here as I stand, of sovereign power possess'd,
 A vast ambition fires my swelling breast;
 I deal destruction round, and, all severe,
 Damn with a dash, and censure with a sneer;
 Or from the Critic wrest a sinking cause,
 Rejudge his justice, and repeal his laws;
 Now half by judgment guided, half by whim,
 I grasp disputed power, and tyrannise like him;
 Food for the mind I seek; but who shall find
 The food that satisfies the craving mind?
 Like fire it rages; and its fatal rage
 What pains can deaden, and what care assuage?
 Choked by its fuel, though it clouded lies,
 It soon eats through, and craves for new supplies;
 Now here, now there, with sudden fury breaks
 And to its substance turns whate'er it takes.
 To weighty themes I fly with eager haste,
 And skim their treasures like the man of taste;
 From a few pages learn the whole design,
 And damn a book for one suspicious line,
 Or steal its sentiments, and call them mine!

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THE BIRTH OF FLATTERY. 'Original MS.' readings given
 as footnotes in *Life and Poems* (1834).

Instead of ll. 1—9:

Muse of my Spenser, who so well could sing
 The Passions, and the sources whence they spring;
 Who taught the birth, the bearings, and the ties,
 The strong connections, nice dependencies,
 Of these the Foes of Virtue and the Friends,

VARIANTS

With whom she rises and with whom descends—
A Syren's birth, a Syren's power I trace,
Aid me, oh! Herald of the Fairy-race;
Say whence she sprang, to what strange fortune born,
And why we love and hate, desire and scorn.

instead of ll. 29—40:

From whom she sprang, not one around her knew,
Nor why she came, nor what she had in view,
Labour she loved not, had no wealth in store,
Pursued no calling, yet was never poor,
A thousand gifts her various arts repaid,
And bounteous fairies blest the thriving maid;
For she had secret means of easy gains,
And Cunning was her name among the swains.

SIR EUSTACE GREY. 'Original MS.' readings given as footnotes in *Life and Poems* (1834).

Instead of ll. 29—32:

The worthy doctor, and a friend.
'Tis more than kind to visit one
Who has not now to spare or spend.

instead of l. 75:

Worms, doctor, worms, and so are we.

instead of ll. 100—7:

Madman! shall He who made this all,
The parts that form the whole reject?
Is aught with him so great or small,
He cannot punish or protect?
Man's folly may his crimes neglect,
And hope the eye of God to shun;
But there's of all the account correct—
Not one omitted—no, not one.

instead of ll. 144—7:

Nay, frown not—hide not—but allow
Pity to one so sorely tried:
But I am calm—to fate I bow
And all the storms of life abide.

instead of ll. 260—7:

Ills that no medicines can heal,
And griefs that no man can forget;
Whatever cares the mind can fret,
The spirits wear, the bosom gall—
Pain, hunger, prison, duns, and debt
Foul-fiends and fear,—I've felt ye all.

VARIANTS

THE HALL OF JUSTICE. 'Original MS.' readings given as footnotes in *Life and Poems* (1834).

Part I.

Instead of ll. 9—12:

What is my crime? a deed of love;
I fed my child with pilfer'd food:
Your laws will not the act approve,
The law of Nature deems it good.

instead of ll. 43—6:

My years, indeed, are sad and few,
Though weak these limbs, and shrunk this frame:
For Grief has done what Time should do;
And I am old in care and shame.

Part II.

instead of ll. 29—34:

Compell'd to feast in full delight
When I was sad and wanted power,
Can I forget that dismal night?
Ah! how did I survive the hour?

instead of ll. 39—41:

And there my father-husband stood—
I felt no words can tell you how—
As he was wont in angry mood,
And thus he cried, "Will God allow,

Preface: p. 92, l. 21. *The following footnote to the words, His Dedication, was omitted in Vol. I:* Neither of these were adopted. The author had written, about that time, some verses to the memory of Lord Robert Manners, brother to the late Duke of Rutland; and these, by a junction, it is presumed, not forced or unnatural, form the concluding part of "The Village."



END OF VOL. II.

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